

PLUCK AND LUCK

TONS OF LUCK OR THE BOY OF MANY GOOD FORTUNES

By Allyn Draper



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By ALLYN DRAPER

CHAPTER I.—Dick Arrives in the City.

The early morning train was pulling slowly through Jersey City. A bright-looking, but countrified youth, of fifteen or sixteen years, was seated in the first coach back of the smoker. One could see that the young traveler was poor, his clothes being patched in many places. They were clean, however, and their owner was healthy-looking and strongly built, while his open countenance, frank, honest look, and manly bearing, were indicative of a strong character and a willingness to work and make his own way. A man who occupied the seat just behind the boy had been watching the young traveler for some time. Presently he leaned forward and touched the youth on the shoulder.

"Going to the city?" he asked, as the boy looked back.

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"Never been there before, I judge?"

"No, sir. This is the first time I have ever been out of Middlesex County, where I have lived all my life."

"So I thought," muttered the man. "That's good. I am glad to know it." Then aloud he said:

"What is your name?"

"Dick Parton."

"Are your folks living?"

"No, sir. I am alone in the world. Father died when I was small, and mother died two years ago. Since then I have lived with Deacon Stubbs, an old friend of father's. The deacon is very poor, however, and did not have enough work for me, and so I made up my mind to come on to the city to—"

"To seek your fortune, eh?" laughingly.

"Yes, sir," he said, soberly. "I hope to rise in the world. They say lots of poor boys have become rich men in New York."

"True," acquiesced the stranger. "I am glad to see you have ambition, Dick. I may call you that? I have no doubt you will succeed. Have—er—have you any friends in the city?"

"No, sir. I have a letter, however, to Mr. Alfred Stubbs, a nephew of the deacon, who has a store on Broadway, near Fortieth Street. The deacon thought he might give me a place in the store."

"H'm, yes, perhaps. Are you going straight there?"

"I think not," he said. "I believe I will go to a cheap hotel and wash up a bit. I feel as if I were awfully dirty."

"Just what I was going to suggest," the man said. This suited him exactly, for we might as well tell the reader that he was a noted New York confidence man and all-round rogue. He had made up his mind to rob Dick. Of course the boy could not have much money, the villain reasoned, but just at that time he was in rather straightened circumstances financially, and all was fish that came to his net.

"My name is Hart, Thomas Hart," the schemer continued. "I am a merchant, from Havensville, Pa., and I am coming to the city to buy a new stock of goods. I was in New York only once, a number of years ago, but I have a good memory, and will have no trouble in finding my way about. I know a nice, quiet hotel we can go to, where we can attend to our toilet and get a good breakfast. You stay by me, and you'll be all right."

Of course, Dick was glad to consent to this. He had never been in a large city, and already a queer feeling of fear had taken hold upon him. The roar and bustle of even Jersey City was bewildering to the country boy, and when the train came to a stop in the grand depot, and he alighted. Dick acknowledged to himself that he would hardly have known which way to turn had he been alone. His companion knew the way, however, and led Dick through the depot to the ferry.

When the boat reached the New York side Dick and the man passed through the depot and emerged upon Cortlandt Street. A queer thrill passed through the boy. He had heard and read much about the great city, had longed to see it, and now he was here. He said nothing, however, and walked along beside his companion until Broadway, three blocks distant, was reached.

"Come on," said the confidence man. "There is a good, cheap hotel up here a couple of blocks." And taking hold of Dick's arm, they made their way slowly northward.

"There's a hotel up the street, yonder, where they only charge two dollars," said Hart. "We'll go there."

They did so. It did not take long to wash, comb and brush up, and then they descended to the dining-room, which was on the ground floor the office being one flight up, and partook of a hearty breakfast. Dick, with his healthy country

appetite, did especial justice to the meal, and caused the waiter to stare in surprise. The boy found time to look about him, however, and was wonder-stricken to see so many people all eating at once.

The two finished breakfast and paid their score at the desk, and then Hart turned to Dick.

"What are you going to do now?" he asked.

"Why not take a look at some of the sights? You have all day to look up your friend, Stubbs. He will probably give you a job, and if you go right to work you will have no chance to see anything. At least, not soon. Now I have nothing special to do, and will be pleased to show you about. What do you say? There is lots to see—Central Park, the Brooklyn Bridge, the large ocean-going vessels, Coney Island, and so on ad infinitum. How does it strike you?"

"I should like it first rate," Dick replied. "You are very kind to offer to go with me."

A few minutes more and they were at the entrance to the great bridge.

Hart led the way upstairs, and they boarded the cars, the confidence man paying the three cents for Dick's fare. The train soon started and they stood on the rear platform with the guard. The view obtained while crossing the bridge was grand, and Dick was delighted.

They alighted when the train stopped.

"Let's walk back," said Dick.

"All right," responded Hart, absent-mindedly. He was pondering over the best means of possessing himself of Dick's pocketbook.

"I'll soon have it," he thought, and suddenly, when they were in a crowd, he lurched heavily against the boy, and caught hold of him, as if to keep from falling. At the same moment he deftly slipped Dick's wallet out of his pocket and put it in his own, the boy never suspecting it.

CHAPTER II.—Dick's Brave Act.

At this instant Dick uttered a cry of horror, which was echoed by a number of people near them.

A beautiful girl of about ten years was standing beside a lady evidently her mother. Both were close to the edge of the platform, and they were evidently waiting to take a train across to the city. Suddenly, just as the train was coming up, and only a few yards distant, the little girl, not thinking, stepped backward off from the platform, and fell to the track, right in front of the advancing train.

"Good heavens!"

"She will be killed!" the crowd yelled.

And she would have been but for Dick. Simultaneously with the exclamations, and his own cry of horror, he leaped to the track beside the child, seized her, threw her back upon the platform, into her mother's arms, and then, having no time to leap up after her, the cars being upon him, he made a grab for the upright rods on the platform of the car, seized them, and, throwing himself backward at the same time, was dragged along for several yards, his feet and body being under the end of the car. Had it not been that the cars were slackening speed when he grabbed the upright, he could not have held on, and would have been killed. As it was, he was badly shaken up,

and had to be assisted to the platform when the cars stopped.

"Is he badly hurt?"

"That boy is a hero!"

"The bravest deed I ever saw!"

Such were the exclamations, and Dick might have felt proud, only he was too shaken up and bewildered to comprehend what was being said or done.

"Oh! Where is he? Where is the brave boy who saved my child?"

All made way for the beautiful lady, who uttered these words as she approached Dick, and the next moment she had the boy in her arms.

"Heaven bless and reward you, my brave boy!" she exclaimed her voice trembling with emotion, her eyes full of tears. "You have saved to me my dearest treasure—my daughter! Thank him, Agnes!"

"I do thank him, mamma," said the little girl, "and I'm going to do more than that—I'm going to hug him!" And she leaped into Dick's arms, threw her arms about his neck, and kissed him.

Dick blushed, and gently put the girl away.

"I didn't do anything, ma'am," he stammered. "That is, I—anybody else would have done the same."

"I do not think so," said the lady. "I am confident that but for you my darling child would now be a man—Ugh! I cannot bear to think of it!"

At this moment Dick felt a heavy hand on his shoulder, and he turned to see a policeman.

"I have you now, you young thief!" the officer cried. "Come along with me, now. I'm going to run you in."

"It is not true!" he cried. "I have not stolen anything I am not a thief."

"Oh, no, of course not," said the policeman, sneeringly. "You're a regular little cherub, you are. You wouldn't steal anything, oh, no!"

"No, I wouldn't!" said Dick with spirit.

"Wait a moment," cried the mother of Agnes, and the policeman halted. "Here," she continued, handing Dick a card, "is my husband's address. I really hope, my boy, that you will be able to clear yourself of this charge, and if you do, call at the address on the card, and my husband will do something for you."

Dick took the card mechanically and placed it in his pocket without looking at it.

The policeman took Dick to the station house, and brought the boy before the sergeant in charge.

"What is your name?" the sergeant asked.

"Dick Parton, sir," the boy replied.

"You don't look like a bad boy," the sergeant said, kindly. "What is the charge against him Callahan?"

"Pocket picking," the policeman answered.

"Explain, Callahan," said the sergeant. "Where is the boy's accuser?"

The officer looked all about the room, and seemed slightly uneasy. He began to fear that he had overreached himself.

"I—he promised to appear here," the officer stammered. "He said the boy picked his pocket, and ordered me to take him in charge."

Suddenly Dick started. He had thought of his companion, Thomas Hart. The excitement attendant upon his rescue of the little girl and his arrest, had caused him to forget all about his friend,

but now he thought of him, and with the thought came the fear:

Might he not prove to be the man who had caused his arrest? And if so, was it not probable that he himself was a pickpocket, and, instead of being robbed by Dick, had robbed him?

Dick hurriedly thrust his hand into his inside coat pocket.

His pocketbook was gone!

"I've been robbed!" he cried. "Twenty dollars—all the money I had in the world, excepting this," showing a few silver coins, "has been stolen from me, and I know who stole it!"

"Tell us all about it," said the sergeant, and Dick did so.

"Callahan," said the sergeant, sternly, "I am ashamed of you! You have allowed yourself to be fooled by Thomas Hart. I know him. He is a noted New York crook and confidence man. There is some excuse for this country lad being taken in, but for you, an old officer, there is none. Here, boy," said the sergeant, showing Dick a photograph of a rather handsome man, "is this familiar to you?"

"Yes," replied Dick, "only he had no whiskers."

"Doubtless. Here Callahan, take a look at this photograph and if you ever run across the gentleman, pull him in. Go to your station."

The officer looked at the photograph, and then withdrew, with a crestfallen air.

"You can go, my boy," said the sergeant, kindly, and Dick availed himself of the privilege at once.

Fifteen minutes later he was at the Metropolitan Hotel, and, seating himself, he drew the silver from his pocket and counted it.

Then suddenly he remembered about the card which the mother of the girl had given him.

He looked at the card and read the address aloud:

"—Broadway," he said, with a start.

"Why, that's the same number where the deacon's nephew has a store! What can it mean?"

CHAPTER III.—Dick's Disappointment.

The number on the card was the same, but the name was not that of Alfred Stubbs.

"James Norwood," read Dick. So that is the name of the little girl's father? And her name is Agnes Norwood.

"But what can this mean?" he continued, a moment later. "The deacon said his son was running a store at — Broadway, but it seems not, since this Mr. Norwood is located there. Maybe the deacon's nephew has moved to some other part of the city. Mr. Norwood will probably know where he is, so the best thing I can do is to go and see him at once."

A few minutes later Dick was aboard a Broadway car, speeding northward.

Getting off at Tenth Street, he soon found the number he was looking for, and entered timidly. A clerk approached, thinking him an intending purchaser.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"I wish to see Mr. Norwood. Is he in?"

There was a dignity about the boy's bearing that impressed the clerk in spite of himself, and he directed Dick to Mr. Norwood's private office without more words.

Mr. Norwood was rather a good-looking man of about forty years but he seemed to be rather out of sorts. Something had disturbed him, and he looked up almost angrily at Dick as he entered.

"Well," said the merchant, "what do you want?"

"I wish to ask you a few questions, sir," and then, without waiting for the merchant to speak, he went on:

"I am from the country. A friend of mine, Deacon Stubbs, directed me to come to this place. He said his nephew Alfred Stubbs, kept a store here. I wished to ask if you knew how long he has been gone from here, and if you could tell me where he is now?"

"He has been gone two months," the merchant said, almost rudely. "He failed in business. I bought his stock of goods at sheriff's sale. I do not know where he is now."

The merchant turned to his desk abruptly, as if the conversation were at an end, but Dick did not leave. He was thinking.

"Here is a pretty state of affairs," he said to himself. "I will get no place with the deacon's nephew, that is certain. I am in for it, and will have to hoe my own row unaided."

Then suddenly he thought of the adventure of the morning, when he had saved the life of the merchant's daughter. The woman had said her husband would do something for the boy if he would call on him at his place of business. Dick thought of this, but his soul revolted against introducing himself as the savior of the man's child, and claiming something for having done so. His modesty would not allow of it.

"He would give me a place in the store, if I were to tell him, I doubt not," Dick thought, "but I won't do it. I will ask him for work, though, and if he will give it to me without doing so as a reward, I shall be glad to accept it. Sir!" the last word aloud.

The merchant had wheeled suddenly and spoke in a sharp, angry tone, the boy not catching the words, so deep in thought was he.

"I asked you why you were standing there?" the merchant said, curtly. "I am very busy, and do not care to be disturbed."

Dick flushed. He was very sensitive, and he did not like the man's tone.

"I thought that perhaps you might give me a place in your store," Dick said. "I was to have a place with Mr. Stubbs, but as he is not—"

The merchant laughed sneeringly.

"What folly!" he interrupted. "You, a green country boy! No, I have no place for you. What could you do?"

"What could I do? If you wish to know, when you go home this evening ask your wife and daughter. They can tell you."

Then without another word, Dick turned and walked out of the office and the store, leaving the merchant staring after him in amazement.

"What could he have meant?" the man asked himself. "What could Hattie and Agnes know about a ragged country boy like that? Bah! He simply wanted something to say, that was all. Still how could he know I had a wife and daughter? I will mention this matter when I go home, as he suggested."

Meanwhile, Dick, having reached the crossing at Twelfth Street, paused to study the situation.

"The outlook is bad," he said, unconsciously

speaking aloud. "Here I am, a stranger in this great city, with no work in sight, and only two dollars and forty cents in money."

"Why, that's a fortune!" said a laughing voice behind Dick, and, turning, he saw a ragged, but bright-looking boy of his own age. Evidently he was a newsboy, for he had a bundle of papers under his arm.

"Who are you?" asked Dick.

"Oh, I'm only Millionaire Astor," said the boy, laughing. "I own that big hotel downtown—the Astor House. It was named after me, you know."

"Don't try to guy me," said Dick. "I am from the country, I know, and can't be expected to know as much about city life as one who has always lived here, but I'm not a fool by any means."

The newsboy sobered instantly.

"That's all right," he said. "I didn't mean anything—was only joking. My name is Bob Curtis, and I'm a newsboy. What's your name?"

"Dick Parton."

"And you're from the country?"

"Yes. From Cranbury, New Jersey. That's about a hundred miles from here."

"Phew! That's a long way from here, isn't it? I was never out of New York except once, when I went over to Jersey City on an errand for a fellow."

"This is my first trip to the city," said Dick. "I only got here this morning."

"What did you expect to do here?" asked Bob.

"I expected to get a place in the store of a nephew of the man I lived with at Cranbury."

"But you can't get it?"

"No. He failed and another man is running the store."

And then a bright thought struck him.

"Maybe I could sell papers," he said. "How much do you make at it?"

Bob shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, sometimes more, sometimes less," he said.

"I'm 'most too big for the biz. People like to buy papers of little kids. I s'pose I make sixty or seventy cents a day on the average, though."

"I might try it anyhow," said Dick. "I've got to do something. What's bothering me most now, though, is where I can stay for a while. I can't pay board at a hotel."

"I'll tell you what you can do, Dick," said Bob. "You can come home with me. I live in a tenement over near the East River, with my mother. I kinder like your looks, and we'll pool issues and work together. What do you say?"

This suited Dick first rate, and he thanked Bob gratefully.

"You shan't lose by this, Bob," he said. "But maybe your mother will object to the addition to the family."

Bob laughed.

"Not much," he said. "I've got jest the best mother you ever saw, Dick. Whatever I say goes. She'll be glad to have you come."

"I'm glad of that. But where will I find you in an hour or so, Bob? I've got to go to a hotel downtown to get my valise."

"Oh, I'll go down with you. That's my regular stamping ground. I come up here on an errand, and thought I might sell some papers going and coming, so I brought them along. Will we walk?"

"No. Let's go on the cars," said Dick. "I'll pay for both."

"All right, Dick. You're a trump. Here comes a car. Let's get on."

The boys boarded the car, and the conductor, who knew Bob, looked surprised to see the newsboy riding.

The boys got off at City Hall Park.

"I'll tell you what to do," said Bob. "I don't go home till evening, so you may as well leave your valise at the hotel till we are ready to go. You can help me sell papers. Take part of these, and do as I do. Don't be afraid to sing out loud. It's rather late in the forenoon to sell papers, but I've only got ten left, and I think we can get rid of them between us."

The boys were standing on the corner, by the post office, just after Bob had sold his last paper, when a gust of wind caught the hat of a passerby, and sent it flying out into the middle of the street. The owner of the hat stood still and stared after his headgear in dismay, but Dick Parton sprang into the roadway, and, running to where the hat lay snatched it from under the feet of a team of horses. The hat was a valuable silk one, and but for the boy's prompt act would have been hopelessly wrecked by the iron-shod hoofs of the horses.

"Many thanks, my young friend," said the man, as Dick, with a smile, handed him his hat. "I should have been sorry to lose my hat, as I value it highly, it being a present from a friend. Here, accept this, with my thanks," and he pressed a silver dollar into Dick's hand and started on, carefully brushing the hat with a silk handkerchief.

Bob was, if anything, better pleased at his friend's good luck than he would have been had it been his own.

They could not do much until the three o'clock editions of the papers were out, but from that time up till seven o'clock they were busy as bees and Dick proved himself a very good salesman.

At seven o'clock Dick secured his valise from the hotel, and accompanied Bob to his home. He found the newsboy's mother a very pleasant old lady, and was well pleased that he had found such good quarters.

Dick soon got used to his new life, and quickly became as proficient in selling papers as his friend and partner, Bob Curtis.

On the third day after going into partnership with Bob, as they were standing on the corner by the Astor House, a youth came along whom Dick knew.

His name was Guy Fairchild, and he was foppish not to say dandish in dress, and affected in manner. He and his mother had visited Cranbury one summer, and Dick had made Guy's acquaintance.

The youth did not see Dick until the latter called out: "How do you do, Guy?" He then stopped and looked around at Dick.

"Did you—aw—speak to me?" he asked, looking at Dick with an unrecognizable stare.

"Yes," replied Dick, laughing. "I said 'How do you do?'"

"Pretty well," was the reply. "But who are you? I don't—aw—just place you."

Guy adjusted his gold-rimmed eyeglasses, and looked at Dick with rather a supercilious air.

"I am Dick Parton, of Cranbury, New Jersey."

Don't you remember me? You were there two years ago you know."

"When did you come to the city?"

"Four days ago."

"And what are you—aw—doing? Selling papers?"

"Yes, and running errands, and so forth."

"Aw, yes. I suppose you don't make much at it?"

"No," said Dick. "Not as much as I would like. I hope to get into something better later on, however."

"Not likely," said Guy, superciliously. "You would doubtless have done better to have stayed in the country. Now, I've got a place in a store at seven dollars a week, with a chance of promotion at an early day. My uncle is head salesman, and he will look out for me, and push me forward."

"I wish I could get a place in a store," said Dick. "Do you think I would stand a chance where you work?"

"No; none at all," Guy hastened to say. "My employer doesn't want any more boys."

"Where is his store?" asked Dick.

Guy looked at Dick suspiciously.

"It's at — Broadway," he answered, hesitatingly. "But it won't do you any good to apply. You won't get a place."

Dick started. The number given by Guy was the same that he had visited the day he had come to the city—the place where Alfred Stubbs had been in business, and where Mr. Norwood was now doing business.

"Oh, I didn't wish to apply to him for a place," said Dick. "I asked out of curiosity, and to know where to look for you. I may come around and see you some time."

"You needn't come during business hours," Guy hastened to say. "My employer is very strict, and he might not like me to have visitors."

"Very well," said Dick, smiling. "I won't bother you, and then when I get a place you will have no excuse for bothering me."

"I don't think I should want to," said Guy with an ill-concealed sneer. "Well, I must be going," and he went on up Broadway.

"Kinder stuck-up sort of chap, isn't he?" remarked Bob, who had remained a silent listener to the conversation.

The boys turned their attention to business, and soon disposed of all their papers. Then they separated, and began looking about for any odd job that might come along. Dick was fortunate, a gentleman giving him fifty cents to go on an errand away up near the north end of Manhattan. As there was to be no return-trip work, and as he had plenty of time at his disposal, Dick went down to the Hudson River. Seating himself on one of the old piers, he drew a copy of "Pluck and Luck" from his pocket and began reading.

Suddenly he was aroused by a cry of "Help! Help!" And he leaped to his feet in excitement. The cry had come from the river, and Dick now looked in that direction. He took in the situation at a glance. The heavy swell left by an Albany steamer had upset a small rowboat, and the occupant, an old, gray-haired, gray-bearded man, was struggling in the water. Evidently he could not swim, and the boat having floated out of his reach, he was in imminent

danger of drowning. Dick threw off his coat and vest, kicked off his shoes, and, springing into the water, swam toward the old man.

CHAPTER IV.—The Hermit of the Palisades.

"Courage! I will save you!" Dick cried.

"Help! hel—" cried the old man, his last cry being choked back by the water as he sank.

Dick swam as fast as he could, and calculated so closely that when the old man came to the surface he was only a few feet away. A few strong strokes brought him within reaching distance, and catching the old man by the arms, Dick whirled him around until his back was toward him; then he encircled the old man's waist under the arms with his left arm. Supporting him thus, Dick swam to the overturned boat. Catching hold of the rudder, the brave boy pushed the boat ahead of him toward the shore, swimming with his feet, at which he was an expert. The old man had ceased struggling, and Dick had but little difficulty in reaching the shore. As soon as he had done so he dragged the old man up onto the land and began to resuscitate him, for the old man was blue, and looked as if he was dead.

Dick feared he was dead, at first, but after being rolled about on the ground, and rubbed vigorously for a few minutes, he began to show signs of returning animation. Presently he gave a gasp, followed by a discharge of water from the mouth and nostrils, and soon he was much revived and able to sit up.

"You have saved my life!"

"I suppose I saved it, sir," he said, modestly.

"You seemed unable to swim."

"What is your name?" the old man asked.

"Dick Parton."

"A very good name. And now, my boy, I am going to tell you mine."

Dick looked at the old man expectantly, and he continued:

"I have not spoken my name in fifteen years, but I am going to now. You must promise that you will not repeat it, however."

"I will never repeat your name if you do not wish it," he said.

"I do not. I am known to the people on the other side of the river as 'The Hermit of the Palisades.' None of them has ever heard my name—which is Thomas Romaine. I am rich, boy—rich! rich! rich—as Croesus, and I do not know that I have a relative living. I am old—seventy-two—and may not live much longer. You shall not lose by what you have done for me, Dick—you shall not lose."

"I do not wish to make anything by saving your life, sir," he said. "The satisfaction that comes of knowing I did my duty is pay sufficient."

"That is right," he said. "That is the right spirit. I believe you are a good, honest boy. I am glad of it, since I have made up my mind to get your help in a certain thing I have in view. Will you help me right my boat and then row me across the river?"

"Certainly," said Dick.

"Good! I want you to go home with me. I wish to have a talk with you."

"I will go," said Dick.

And he did. They righted the boat, secured the oars, and were soon headed across the river, Dick rowing and the old man steering. He guided the boat diagonally across, the prow being turned slightly up the river, and twenty minutes later the boat was under the brow of the Palisades. Presently an opening was seen, and into this the old man steered the boat. The channel was narrow and tortuous, there being just room to work the oars, but in a few moments they emerged into a small basin, perhaps two acres in extent. Of this about half was water, the other half being sandy land, sloping up so that there seemed to be no danger of its being flooded, even at high tide. On this little patch of land was an old tumbledown building that at one time had been a fairly respectable house. They stepped ashore, and, after tying the boat so it could not drift away, the old man led the way to the house, and, unlocking and throwing open the door, stepped to one side.

"Enter," he said. "You will be the first person other than myself to enter this house since I have been living here."

Dick stepped through the open doorway into the old hermit's house. He was surprised to find that the furnishings, chairs, carpets, etc., including a sofa, were of the finest. The old man seated himself, and regarded Dick steadily for a few minutes. Dick met the gaze unflinchingly, and Mr. Romaine seemed satisfied.

"Dick," he said, slowly, and with deliberation, "I have brought you here for a purpose, and I am now going to tell you what that purpose is."

Dick regarded the speaker attentively, and the old man went on:

"I am going to tell you a true story. Twenty years ago there lived in a small town in central Wisconsin a sober, steady, industrious man, who shall be nameless. He was fifty years old, and unmarried, but in an evil hour he fell in love with a beautiful, but worldly woman twenty-five years his junior. This woman professed to return the man's love—promised to become his wife, in fact, and the day for the wedding was set.

"About this time the only remaining parent of this man—his mother—died, and his brother, and only living relative, a young man of twenty-eight, came out from New York State, where they had lived, and took up his abode in the village. He was young, gay, and handsome; was, of course, introduced to his brother's intended wife, and—well, to cut a long story short, the woman proved faithless. She fell in love with the younger brother, he with her, and one night they fled together, and were married.

"It was a severe blow to the elder brother, for he had loved the woman, unworthy though she was, and, unwilling to remain where he had experienced such sorrow, he left the village and went to California. He was fortunate, amassing a fortune in five years, at the end of which time he returned to the East, locating—here, for I am the elder brother, Dick," the old man finished, sadly.

"I am sorry," said Dick. He wished to express his sympathy, and knew of nothing else to say.

The old man remained silent for some moment and then continued:

"I heard of the erring couple several times.

They located in a town in Montana. In three years a son was born to them. A year afterward my brother died, and I have heard no word of the mother and child since.

"That brings me back to the starting point, Dick," the old man continued. "I am old; I cannot live many years longer. I am rich, and have no one to leave my wealth to. Now I would not leave it to the woman who treated me so cruelly, under any circumstances; but the boy—I have often thought of him. It might be, if he is alive, that he is an honest, worthy boy. I have thought of it, and hoped that it was so. If it is, I will leave the bulk of my wealth to him. It will be necessary to find out whether this is true or not, however, and Dick, that is the task I am going to ask you to undertake for me. If you will do it, I will pay all your expenses, and reward you liberally besides. Will you attempt it? Do not answer hastily. Study the matter over a little first."

"There is no necessity of studying over the matter, sir," he said, quietly. "I would be glad to do as you wish. The only question in my mind is, regarding my ability to do what you wish done successfully. Aren't you afraid to trust a boy like me. Mr. Romaine?"

"Not at all. I am a good judge of human nature, and I am confident you are the very person above all others that I need for this work. I am willing and glad to trust you. If you say you will do the work, we will consider the matter settled."

"Very well, then," said Dick, "you may so consider it. I will undertake the work."

"Good! And now I will give you the name of the town in Montana you will have to go to, and will give you full instructions. You will have no difficulty in following them out, I am confident."

He did so, and at the end of an hour, Dick arose to depart, having secured a perfect understanding of what was expected of him. The old man took a roll of bills from his pocket, and selecting five, handed them to Dick.

"There is fifty dollars," he said. "When you return to the city go to a clothing store and get a suit of clothes and come back to me as soon as you can conveniently. Traveling in public, as you will be, you wish to look well. Don't fail to come here in the morning, early. I will then give you money to pay your traveling expenses, and your final instructions. You can do this and return to the city in plenty of time to catch the ten o'clock westbound train for Chicago."

Dick thanked Mr. Romaine as he accepted the money, and then, promising to be on hand bright and early in the morning, he took his departure, crossing the river in the old man's boat.

CHAPTER V.—Dick Surprises Guy.

Arriving at the other side, Dick tied the boat securely, and then, going across to Ninth Avenue, he took the elevated for downtown. When the train reached Fourteenth Street, Dick arose and left the car. He had been struck with an idea, and he smiled to himself as he made his way across Broadway.

"I'll just surprise Guy Fairchild a bit," he said

to himself. "Mr. Norwood keeps clothing and furnishing goods. I'll buy my suit there. Guy will see for himself that I am not so poor and insignificant as he thinks."

Dick was soon in front of Mr. Norwood's store. Entering, the first person he saw was Guy.

"You here!" the youth cried. "I thought I told you not to call on me during business hours. I can't give you any of my time!"

"Oh, I haven't asked you to," said Dick quietly. "I have no desire to talk to you or take up your valuable time. I wish to purchase a suit of clothes."

"What, you!" sneeringly. "How could you buy a suit of clothes? You have no money, I'll wager, and you cannot get credit."

"I shall pay for what I buy. I have the money—see?" and Dick may be pardoned if he enjoyed the look of envy and chagrin that appeared on Guy's face when he saw the roll of bills Dick drew from his pocket.

A salesman—none other than Guy's uncle, in fact—appeared at this instant, and Dick was soon fitted out. He chose a neat-fitting sack suit, gray in color; a black derby hat, a pair of congress shoes, four white shirts, three suits of underwear, and some handkerchiefs, ties and collars.

"What is the bill?" he asked, when the goods had been done up in two neat parcels.

"Thirty-seven dollars," replied the salesman.

Dick quietly selected four ten-dollar bills and handed them over, receiving three dollars back.

"Thank you," said the obsequious salesman, politely. "Call again when you are wishing anything in our line. Be glad to wait on you, I assure you."

"I may do so," replied Dick, "though I usually do my trading wherever I happen to be when in need of anything. Good day." And he marched out with his packages under his arm, followed by the angry, not to say envious, looks of Guy Fairchild.

Dick took a Broadway car, and half an hour later was in his room at Mrs. Curtis'. Bob had not come home yet, and Mrs. Curtis had not seen Dick come in, so he said nothing about his good luck that evening, but put his purchases away and waited till morning. Dick waited next morning till Bob had arisen and left the bedroom—they slept together—and then he got up and dressed himself in his new clothes. Then he went into the dining-room, where Mrs. Curtis and Bob were waiting for him, breakfast being ready. To say that he created a sensation is putting it mildly. Mrs. Curtis threw up her hands in surprise, while Bob stared in open-mouthed astonishment.

"Great guns!" he cried. "Is that you, Dick? Say! Where was the fire?"

Dick laughed good-humoredly.

"There was no fire," he said, "or if there was, I wasn't there. I bought these clothes."

"Bought them!" cried Bob. "What with? Where'd you get the money? When you left me yesterday afternoon two dollars and ten cents was all the money you had. You didn't get that outfit for two dollars and ten cents, did you?"

"Hardly. This suit, with the hat, shoes, shirts, underwear, and so forth, cost thirty-seven dollars."

"Phew!" whistled Bob. "Thirty-seven dollars!

Say, Dick, have you fell heir to a fortune? Has some rich old man adopted you, or what? Tell a fellow, can't you? I'm dying to know."

"Of course, I'll tell you," said Dick, smiling. "It is very simple. After I left you yesterday afternoon a gentleman sent me away up to the end of the island on an errand. Not being in any special hurry to come back, I went across to the river front, and seating myself on the wharf, began reading. I was aroused by a cry for help, and saw an old man struggling in the water, I saved him from drowning, and he gave me the money."

"My, but you were in luck, Dick!" cried Bob. "The old fellow must be rich. Who is he?"

"He is rich," declared Dick, "and he is known as the Hermit of the Palisades. He lives over there."

Bob was greatly interested.

"Did you go there with him?" he asked.

"Yes. He wanted me to row him across, and I did so."

"How much money did he give you?"

"Fifty dollars. But I don't want you to think I accepted the money for saving his life. It was my duty to do that, and I would not have accepted pay for it under any circumstances. I have entered his employ, and the money was given me as a sort of advance payment."

"But what did the old man hire you to do?"

Bob asked, a moment later. "What work could he have for a boy?"

"I am going away on a journey on business for him," said Dick.

"On a journey? Where to?"

Bob was greatly interested.

"To Montana."

"Montana. That's away out West, isn't it?"

"Yes. West of the Mississippi River."

"That's a long ways, isn't it?" said Bob. "I wish I could go with you."

"When do you start?" asked Mrs. Curtis.

"This morning, on the ten o'clock train."

"So soon!" cried Mrs. Curtis. "His business must be very urgent."

"It is," assented Dick. "And that reminds me, I must be going as soon as I eat breakfast. I have to go and see my employer before I go."

After breakfast Dick set out, and at the end of three-quarters of an hour was at Mr. Romayne's home. The old man greeted the boy cordially, and looked him over approvingly.

"You are a fine-looking boy," he said. "I am quite proud of you."

"Fine feathers make fine birds,' I've heard, sir," said Dick, smiling.

"Which does not apply in your case, I am confident," with an answering smile.

Then Mr. Romayne gave Dick his final instructions, and bade him good-by and Godspeed, first, however, handing him a wallet, which, from the feeling, was well filled. And it was. Dick was surprised, on opening it, after reaching home, to find it contained two hundred dollars. It was a few minutes of ten o'clock when Dick and Bob reached the Pennsylvania depot in Jersey City, and at the big iron gates stopped for a few moments to say good-by to each other. Then Dick passed through, and was soon seated in a chair in one of the chair cars. A few moments later the train started, and a thrill, partly of pleasurable excitement, partly of a queer, undefinable

fear of he knew not what, passed over him. He was started on his long Western trip.

CHAPTER VI.—Wrecked and Robbed.

For it seemed to Dick, at any rate. Dick was feeling well, however, and as he leaned back in the luxurious chair, and watched the beautiful panorama or fleeting landscapes, his spirits rose.

"This is nice," he said to himself. "I am going to enjoy myself, or know the reason why. I almost wish I might go on this way forever."

But riding in the cars, even on the smooth, rock-ballast continuous-rail roads of the East becomes monotonous after a time, though Dick would have hardly believed it just then. Wearying finally, of gazing out of the window, Dick took a look at the passengers within the car. Presently a man who sat one seat in front, folded up a paper he had been reading, put it in his pocket, and half turning, gave Dick a searching glance.

"Nice country," he remarked, with a glance out of the window.

"Yes," replied Dick, almost coldly.

He remembered his experience of only a few days ago with Thomas Hart, the confidence man, and he thought it would do no harm to be careful. He would not make friends with every one that came along, he told himself. Yet this man appeared to be all right. He was of middle age, very respectable-looking, and seemed to be a gentleman.

"H'm!" he said. "Going far?"

Dick hesitated a moment. He almost decided to give an evasive reply, and then the thought struck him, what could it matter? There could certainly be no harm in answering the man's question.

"I go to Chicago," he said.

"To Chicago?" the man repeated. "Good! I go there, too. Am bound for the World's Fair. We will be traveling companions. Going to see the fair, I suppose?"

"No, sir; on business."

"Ah! On business. I suppose you will look in on the fair, though?"

"Oh, yes. I shall spend three or four days sight-seeing when I come back through the city."

"Ah! Then you go still farther West?"

"Yes, sir. To Montana."

"Exactly. Well, I am glad I spoke to you. It is so much more pleasant to have some one to talk to when traveling. By the way, I haven't learned your name."

"Dick Parton."

"Ah, yes. Mine is August Belmont. Have a cigar, Mr. Parton?"

"Thanks," he said, "but I do not smoke."

"That is good luck, for you, my boy," approvingly. "Wish I had never contracted the habit."

"It costs quite a good deal in the course of a year, does it not?"

"You are right. It is an expensive habit. It costs me more than my clothing."

"Why don't you quit it, then?"

"Easier said than done, Dick, my boy," he said.

"It is like liquor, once it gets its grip on you. Keep clear of them both, if you know when you are well off."

"I shall do so."

Mr. Belmont subsided again. The day passed without incident. Pittsburg was reached in the evening, and then the train went on into the night, all on board looking forward to reaching Chicago early in the morning. Late at night, when rounding a curve at a high rate of speed, the train was derailed, and rolled over and over down a steep embankment. In an instant cries and shrieks of terror and pain arose on the night air. It was terrible. Something struck Dick on the head, but he remained conscious long enough to know that his traveling companion dragged him out of the car and away from the train. Then he felt Belmont's fingers in his pockets; felt him extract his wallet from his inside vest pocket: though to himself in a listless sort of way, that the man was robbing him, and then relapsed into unconsciousness.

Dick remained unconscious only a few minutes, for when he opened his eyes, and sat up, the excitement attendant upon the wrecking of the train was at its height. Cries of pain and screams of terror arose on every hand, and, unmindful of himself, Dick struggled to his feet and hastened to lend assistance to those who were endeavoring to rescue the seriously injured from their perilous positions amid the ruins of the coaches. Suddenly it was noticed that one of the coaches was on fire. Efforts were made to put the fire out, but it could not be accomplished, and then all worked to get the injured passengers out of this coach, before the fire should make it impossible. It was thought they had been successful until a cry from an old gentleman startled all.

"My granddaughter! She is in the car yet! Oh! Who will save her?"

The old gentleman was wringing his hands in agony, and Dick was greatly affected.

"I will try, sir," he said. "I will save her, if I can." And he sprang forward and disappeared through the broken window of the burning coach. The fire was under full headway, and it seemed foolhardy to venture within the coach, but Dick did not stop to think of that. A life was at stake. The smoke was so thick that the boy could not see, so he went along slowly, feeling in every berth. Presently, his hand came in contact with the girl's form, and lifting her out, Dick struggled toward the window. For a few moments he thought he would be unable to reach it. He was gasping for breath. His lungs were filled with smoke, and seemed on fire. He staggered. The girl's body seemed to weigh a ton.

But suddenly he caught a breath of fresh air. He had reached the window. He had enough strength left to push the girl up through the opening, but sank helpless to the floor. He would have perished there, had not one of the passengers sprung down and lifted him out. A cheer went up when Dick and the girl he had saved were brought safely away from the vicinity of the fire, and an examination of the girl's condition was made at once by a physician, one of the passengers. The physician administered restoratives, and announced that she would be all right in a few minutes.

"Thank heavens!" cried the old gentleman. "We owe it to you, my brave boy," he said turning to Dick, who had fully recovered from the effects of the smoke. "How can we ever thank you?"

The girl came to at that moment, and the old gentleman turned his attention to her. As soon as she had fully recovered he called Dick and introduced him. Dick accepted the dainty hand which the girl extended, but when she began to praise his bravery, and thank him for risking his life to save hers, he drew back. All the injured passengers had been taken to neighboring farm houses to be taken care of, while three who had met their death in the crash were laid out for burial. The wreck had been cleared up as best it could, and when finally the train arrived that had been telegraphed for the uninjured passengers hastened to get aboard. The train started presently, and then, for the first time, Dick became conscious of the fact that his head was aching. The excitement of the half hour preceding had been so great that he had not realized his own condition. He took off his hat and felt of his head. When he drew his hand away it was covered with blood.

"Excuse me," he said, politely, to Mr. Overton and Ethel, and started to rise, intending to go to the end of the car and wash his wound, but Ethel was too quick for him. She had seen the blood, and she placed her hand on his shoulder, detaining him.

"Wait," she said. "You are wounded. You have been working like a Trojan to save others, myself among them, now it is my turn. I am going to see how badly hurt you are, and then dress your wound. Sit still," as Dick made a motion to rise. "I am going to have my way, and you may as well make up your mind to that at once," and she arose and began an examination of Dick's injury.

Dick made no further objections, and Ethel's deft fingers parted the hair away from the wound, which was a cut in the scalp a couple of inches in length. It was not dangerous, but rather painful, and when the girl washed the wound carefully, and bound it with one of her own handkerchiefs, Dick felt much better, the pain being considerably allayed. The old gentleman had remained silent so far, but when Ethel had seated herself he began:

"How old are you, Dick?"

"Sixteen, sir."

"You are going to Chicago, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you live there?"

"No, sir, I live in New York."

"Parents are alive, I suppose?"

"My parents are dead."

"You are like Ethel, here," Mr. Overton said. "She is an orphan, the only child of my only son and child. We have no relatives, only each other, and we would die if it were not for each other, would we not, Ethel?"

The girl reached up and gave the old gentleman a kiss.

"Indeed we would, grandpa," she said.

"As it is, we get lonesome sometimes," Mr. Overton continued. "We live in a big house on Fifth Avenue—for I am very rich, Dick—and I know Ethel often longs for companions of her own age. I wish—what do you do in New York, Dick? What is your business?"

"I have been there only a few days," said Dick. "I came from Cranbury, New Jersey. I am a poor boy, and until yesterday, when I started

on this journey, I had lived by selling papers, running errands, and doing odd jobs."

The old gentleman looked surprised.

"But you do not look like a poor boy," he said. "You are well dressed, and seem to have been well educated. Then, too, poor boys do not make long railway journeys. It costs too much money."

"True," said Dick, smiling. And then he explained all to Mr. Overton—how he was going West on business for an old gentleman in New York, who paid his expenses, and who furnished the money to buy new clothes."

Mr. Overton was silent for a few moments, then he asked, abruptly:

"When will you be back in New York, Dick?"

"I don't know, sir. Perhaps in a week, perhaps not for two weeks."

The old gentleman drew a card from his pocket, bearing his name and address, and handed it to Dick.

"When you return to the city come at once to see me," he said. "I will be there. Ethel and I are going to remain only a week in Chicago."

Dick's intention was to go straight on to Montana, but when he felt in his inside pocket for his wallet he found it gone. Then, and then only, did he remember the occurrence of the night of the railway accident, when his traveling companion, August Belmont, dragged him out of the coach and to the side of the track, only to rob him and leave him to his fate.

"Goodness! I had forgotten about that," said Dick to himself, in dismay. "I have no money with which to buy a ticket. I could have borrowed of Mr. Overton had I thought of it, but he is gone, and I don't know what hotel they will put up at. It would be like hunting for a needle in a haystack to look for them in this great city. What shall I do?"

Then a thought struck Dick.

"They came here to see the World's Fair," he said. "They will be there tomorrow sure. I will remain and go out to the grounds myself. Perhaps I may run across them. If I can do that I will be all right."

He was up bright and early next morning and soon after breakfast left the hotel. He went to the foot of Van Buren Street and went aboard a World's Fair grounds steamer. He enjoyed the trip down the lake to Jackson Park, seven miles distant very much. When he had reached the park, however, and entered the grounds was when he opened his eyes. He had never expected to see anything like this. It was far and away more magnificent than his wildest imaginings had pictured it. Dick was unsuccessful in his search for Mr. Overton and Ethel, but about the middle of the afternoon he was electrified by coming face to face with—August Belmont!

CHAPTER VII.—Trapped.

Dick's fellow traveler was walking along, his hands in his pockets, a cigar in his mouth, and a supremely contended look on his face. When his eyes fell upon Dick, however, his expression changed. He stopped suddenly, his underjaw dropped, while his countenance took on a sickly look of dismay and terror. His looks betrayed his guilt. In an instant he recovered himself.

however, and turning abruptly, would have slipped away through the crowd had not Dick leaped forward and seized him by the arm.

"Wait, August Belmont!" Dick said, firmly. "Don't be in such a hurry. I have business with you. I want that money you took from my pocket the other night!"

"Money I took from your pocket!" the villain repeated, as if in surprise. "What do you mean, Dick?"

"Just what I say, and I don't want any talk, either!" in a determined tone. "You robbed me night before last, after dragging me out of the coach in the railway accident, and I want my money back. If you don't hand it over I will call an officer and have you taken in custody."

Dick was thoroughly in earnest, and Belmont knew it. While inwardly cursing his bad luck in coming face to face with his victim, he was trying to think of some scheme to enable him to get out of having to give the money back to the boy for the present, and to finally escape from him altogether. Belmont glanced around, with the idea of making a dash to escape at once, but several policemen were close at hand, and Dick would evidently make such an outcry that he would be captured, so Belmont decided to pretend to yield to Dick and try to escape later by the aid of cunning.

"Don't do that, my boy; please don't. I—this is the first time I ever did such a thing in my life. I—I do not understand it at all," and the scoundrel, who was a good actor, passed his hand across his eyes in a bewildered manner.

"I am rich, Dick," he went on; "have all the money I need, and more, and why I took that money from you is more than I can tell. It must have been the excitement—or perhaps the jar and crash as the cars were wrecked unsettled me mentally for the time being."

"Well," said Dick, quietly, "your story may be true, and then again it may not. I have no means of knowing whether it is or isn't, but I am going to give you the benefit of the doubt, if you will return to me the money you took I will agree to let you go free."

"Oh, I will do that willingly, gladly," said Belmont. "I have wished that I might see you so that I might return your money to you."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Mr. Belmont. Well, hand over the money and you may go in peace."

"Oh, I haven't the money with me, Dick."

"You haven't?"

"No."

"Where is it then?"

"At my hotel."

"Why did you leave it there?" he asked.

"For safe keeping, Dick. I am a very careful man, and as Chicago is just now full of pickpockets, one cannot be too careful."

"I judge that is true," remarked Dick, dryly. "Indeed it is. In such crowds as you see here,"

Belmont made a comprehensive sweep with his arm; "It is no trouble at all for skillful pickpockets to go through the pockets of people. Knowing this, I placed your money and most of my own in the hotel safe, and brought only a few dollars in loose change with me. It is the only safe way, and I should advise you to do the same way."

"Thank you; I believe I shall do so—when I get my money."

"To be sure, you will have to have the money first. Well, come with me, and you will soon get it. I've seen about all I care to for today, anyway, and was just thinking of going back downtown."

"I am ready to go," said Dick, quietly. "Lead on and I will follow."

"All right; this way, Dick," and Belmont led the way through the crowd toward the west entrance to the grounds.

It was slow work, for there was an immense crowd, and they were a half hour at least in getting to the gate. Leaving the grounds, they boarded a train of the Illinois Central Railroad, and were soon rolling toward the city proper at a rapid rate. It only took about twenty minutes to make the trip, and, alighting at Van Buren Street, Belmont led Dick a merry chase through the streets of Chicago, going by gradual degrees in the direction of the tough quarter of the city.

Dick began to think it was a long distance to the hotel, however, and was just on the point of saying so, when Belmont suddenly said: "Ah! here we are!" and made his way up the steps of what purported to be a hotel, Dick following. The building was a large, rambling structure, and had only recently been liberally bedaubed with paint. The sign over the door, telling the passersby that this was the "Standard Hotel," was newly painted also, and although Dick did not know it, this place, while in reality a hotel, had been lifted up by crooks for the accommodation of crooks during the time of the fair. It was a dangerous place, indeed, and woe to the honest man with money upon his person who entered there. Belmont advanced to the clerk's desk, and, catching the clerk's eye, gave him a wink.

"Carleton," he said, "I have a package in the safe which I would like to have. You remember, I gave it to you last night to put in the safe?"

Then the clerk opened a door and passed into a little room which, presumably, contained a safe. Presently the clerk returned, bearing a small package, which he handed to Belmont.

"Come up to my room. I don't wish to open this here."

Dick nodded and followed Belmont from the room. They made their way up a flight of stairs, along the hall and then up another flight of stairs and along another hall, coming to a stop presently in front of one of the rooms. Belmont produced a key, and, unlocking the door, entered, Dick following:

"Sit down, Dick," Belmont said. "You see, I didn't wish to open the package down in the office. One never knows who might be around."

Then, as Dick stepped to the farther side of the room and sat down, Belmont half turned, and saying, "Oh, I forgot to close the door!" stepped toward it as if to close it. Instead of doing this, however, he suddenly leaped through the doorway, jerked the door to and turned the key in the lock. Dick leaped to his feet and sprang toward the door as it closed, but was too late. He seized the knob and turned it, but the door would not open.

CHAPTER VIII.—Dick Makes Some Discoveries.

Dick Parton was in a bad predicament. At any rate, that is the way he looked at it. He tried the door once more, and rattled and shook it vigorously, but it was solid, and he could make no impression on it. Then he glanced above it to see if he might escape through the transom, but there was none there. Next he looked for the window, only to find that there was no window; it was an interior room. It really looked as if there was no chance of escape, save by the door, and as he had tried that without avail, Dick, very much discouraged, threw himself down in the chair. Just then he glanced up at the ceiling and an exclamation escaped him:

"Great Scott! There's a window in the ceiling!" he cried, "and the light comes in through that. But what is up there—an attic room? My! I wish I could get up to it! I might be able to escape then."

But how was he to reach the window in the ceiling? There was no furniture in the room, save a couple of rickety chairs, and if he were to stand on these and try to reach the window he would be likely to fall and break an arm, a leg or his neck. There was nothing else to do, however, so, laying one chair down on the floor, Dick placed the other one carefully on top of it. Next he tried to climb up on top of these, but just as he thought he was going to succeed the chairs toppled and down he came with a thump. He alighted upon his feet, however, and carefully rearranging the chairs, tried again. This time he was successful and managed to keep his balance and reach the sash, which was a single one with four small panes of glass. The sash was hooked upon the under side, and, unhooking it, Dick easily pushed the sash away. But now a new difficulty confronted him.

Dick's head did not reach the ceiling by a foot, at least, and he could not jump in an effort to get up through the opening for the reason that his footing was too frail. Any effort to leap upward would result in the collapsing of the chairs. There was only one thing to do and that was to draw himself up slowly, entirely by the strength of his fingers and arms, and as there was nothing but a bare, smooth floor above, with no chance for obtaining a finger hold, this would be a very difficult feat indeed.

It was a terrible strain. The youth's face grew red and the veins stood out on his neck like whipcords, but slowly and surely he drew his body upward, until finally, by a quick twist of his arms, he changed the order from pulling upward to pushing downward, this being comparatively easy, and a few moments later he was lying upon the floor beside the opening, panting, almost gasping for breath, so great had been the exertion which he had put forth. But Dick had succeeded in escaping from the room below, and he was happy.

Presently, when he had rested sufficiently, Dick sat up and looked about him. What he saw was an attic room about twenty feet square, with two windows at one side and one at another. But what surprised him most was the contents of the room. Scattered here and there were articles of clothing, jewelry, hardware, such as knives, razors, revolvers, etc., great piles of fine dress goods, such

as silks, satins, etc.; in fact, a miscellaneous assortment of valuable goods of all kinds.

"My!" he said to himself, "how the police would like to know of this! I wish I was out of here, I'd go and inform them of what I have discovered."

Dick went and looked out of the windows in turn. They overlooked an alley at the rear, but the descent was a sheer one of sixty feet at least, with nothing to aid one in getting down. At one side of the room Dick found a door in the floor, and, taking hold of the leather strap which was nailed to the door, and evidently served for a handle, Dick carefully lifted the door.

He did not know what he might see below and it behooved him to be cautious. A short steep pair of stairs was revealed, and, after a little hesitation, Dick began the descent. Slowly and with great care Dick made his way down the steps, and when he reached the bottom he paused, and, standing perfectly still, listened at the keyhole of the door, there being merely a small landing, with a door beyond, at the bottom. Dick listened for a minute, at least, but hearing nothing, decided to proceed farther, if possible. Taking hold of the door knob, he turned it gently and pushed against the door. To his surprise, for he had not expected it, the door opened and Dick struck his head through and took a survey of the situation. There was not much to see—merely a hall—and, as the coast was clear, Dick stepped through the doorway and moved slowly and cautiously along the hall. It was uncarpeted and he had to exercise extreme care to keep from making a noise. By tiptoeing, however, he was reasonably successful and presently he reached another door at the end of the hall. Besides the door at the end, there was a door at the right hand and one at the left hand, but Dick made no attempt to open either one of the three just then. Instead, he stooped with his ear to the keyhole of the door in front and listened. Two men were talking in a low tone, but were so close to Dick, only the door being between, that he could understand what they said.

"What did you do with that cub you brought in a little while ago, old man?" asked a voice.

"Oh, I locked him up in a room," was the reply, in a voice Dick recognized. "He is a stranger in the city and I was afraid he might get lost. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

It was Belmont and some crony of like ilk.

CHAPTER IX.—A Villainous Scheme.

"Who and what was the kid, anyway, Belmont?" the voice asked.

"Oh, a green youngster whose acquaintance I made on a train as I was coming from New York. The train was wrecked and he got a clip on the head that knocked him silly. I dragged him out of the car to a place of safety and then relieved him of his wallet as a remuneration for my labor and trouble."

"Ha! Ha! Ha! That must have been a shock, old man!"

"Indeed it was. Well, I told him I had his money in the hotel down in the city, and if he would come along with me I'd give it to him. He

agreed, so I brought him here, and he's in a room on this floor, locked up tight and fast."

"What are you going to do with him?"

"I haven't decided yet."

"The boys said you made a winning last night."

"Yes, off the money I got from the kid we were talking about."

"How much did you win?"

"Seven hundred."

"Phew! Pretty good for one evening! Say, can't you lend a fellow twenty?"

"Sure thing, old man! Here you are!"

"Thanks. When my ship comes in—you know what I mean—I'll pay you back."

"Oh, yes; I remember now. You wrote me that you had been in contemplation of marrying a second or third cousin of yours who would be worth all kinds of money at her eighteenth birthday. How are you coming on with your suit?"

"Not the best in the world. I thought when I wrote you that I was going to have the easiest kind of a snap, but I've been forced to change my mind."

"How was that?"

"You see, it was this way: The girl's folks live out in Montana. Her father owned a big cattle ranch, and was worth a lot of money. He was a widower and Lucy was his only child, and lived out there and kept house for him. But he died a month or so ago and he made Lucy promise to come to Chicago and get an education, as she had no advantage out there. So she wrote to my aunt, who is related to her on her father's side, and asked if she might come and live with her and go to school. Aunt didn't want to be bothered with her and said she would write and tell her so. I just happened to be calling on my aunt that afternoon, and she wrote the letter at once and gave it to me to post."

"Well, an idea struck me. Why could I not have the girl come to Chicago and then marry her and get her property? It would be a great scheme, if I could work it, and I thought I could, so, instead of mailing aunt's letter, I took it to my rooms and burned it; then wrote one myself and signed my aunt's name."

"I mailed the letter and then I rented a house away out on the north side, hired a woman to represent my aunt, and when Lucy Hopper arrived in the city, I met her at the depot, told her I was sent by my aunt, and took her to the house and introduced her to the woman as my aunt."

"Matters went swimmingly for a week, and then one evening she told me that she had learned that the woman was not her aunt, and said she was going to pack her traps and get out."

"What did you do?" asked the voice of Belmont, who had been a silent and evidently interested auditor, as had Dick, who clenched his fists as he thought of the dartingly trick the scoundrel had played on the unsuspecting girl.

"What did I do? Why, reasoned with her; told her she was mistaken and all that, but she would not listen to me. She said she had it straight, and there was no use of me wasting my breath; she was going to go. I asked her where she would go, and she said anywhere to get away from where she was."

"Well, when I saw it was no use and that she meant business, I pretended to be sorry and told her I would get a carriage and take her to a nice,

quiet hotel. She did not suspect me, and said 'very well,' and I came down here as quickly as I could and made arrangements to have her kept here; then I went back, and when she was ready, got a carriage and brought her and her trunk here."

"Jove! What nerve!" said Belmont, admiringly. "Didn't she tumble to the kind of place it was when you got out of the carriage?"

"No, she is an innocent, unsophisticated thing, something like your kid friend, and she never suspected a thing until after we got her into the room and then it was too late."

"And she's in the building, now?"

"Sure thing! But she's stubborn as a mule and says she will die before she will consent to marry me."

"Why don't you get some one to represent a minister and have a sham marriage?"

"I've thought of it, and if she don't show signs of yielding before much longer, I shall do that very thing. She's a pretty thing, though, Belmont, and I'd rather have a genuine marriage, if I can bring it about. Then I'd rather be surer of getting hold of her property."

"By the way," continued the voice of Belmont's companion, "I have some silk handkerchiefs and stuff on my person, and I guess I'll take them up and add them to my store in the attic. Will you go up?"

"No, yonder's a vacant chair. I'll go over and have a hack at faro."

Dick felt a cold chill go over him and then he caught hold of the knob on the door at the left, gave it a turn and pushed. Glory! The door opened! Dick hesitated only long enough to see that it was dark beyond and then he leaped through and closed the door, just as Belmont's friend opened the other. Then of a sudden the floor seemed to be sinking away beneath his feet.

Down, down he went, until finally the floor stopped and Dick felt all around for a door, but found none. He found a sort of finger-hold in the wall at one side, however, and, giving a pull, a panel about two feet by four slid back, showing a well-furnished room beyond. Dick stooped and stepped through the opening, to find himself confronted by a pale but beautiful girl of not more than seventeen years, who stared at him, eagerly, almost wildly.

CHAPTER X.—An Arrant Scoundrel

Dick stared in amazement.

"Who are you, miss?" he exclaimed. And then a remembrance of the conversation he had just heard between Belmont and his friend came to Dick, and he cried:

"You are Lucy Hopper!"

The girl, in her turn, look surprised.

"You know my name?" she said. "Who are you?"

"My name is Dick Parton, miss," he said, "and I, like yourself, am a prisoner in this place."

"You know I am a prisoner?" the girl cried. "How did you learn this?"

"I overheard a man talking about you a few minutes ago," Dick explained, and then he told the girl all he had heard.

"He told the truth," the girl said. "He is a

dreadful man, and has had me a prisoner here for several days."

Then she shuddered and looked at Dick wistfully and went on:

"And he says he is going to have a friend impersonate a minister and go through a marriage ceremony whether I am willing or not. That is dreadful! Oh! I must escape from here. Will you not—can you not aid me to do so, Mr. Parton?"

"I would like to, miss," said Dick. "And I will do so if I can, but I am a prisoner, too, you know. Perhaps we may be able to escape, however."

Then Dick tried the door, but it refused to be opened, and the youth looked at the girl, and then glanced hesitatingly toward the elevator shaft. At this instant footsteps were heard outside, and the girl became greatly excited.

"Oh, someone is coming," she whispered. "What shall we do?"

"I'll get back in the shaft, here, and close the panel," whispered Dick, "and then as soon as the person goes away I will come back."

"Quick!" breathed the girl, as the key grated in the lock, and Dick sprang through the opening and pushed the panel almost shut, leaving a narrow slit through which he could peep. He had just got his eyes to the crack when the door opened and admitted a man who looked to be about thirty years of age. He would have been a very good-looking man but for a certain sinister cast to his countenance. He smiled upon Lucy Hopper in a manner intended to be pleasing, but there was something wolfish even in the smile.

"Ah, Lucy! Glad to see you looking so well," he greeted. "And I hope I find you in a better frame of mind toward me?" he insinuated, with another smile intended to be pleasant.

Then the fellow advanced closer and, in a voice intended to be pleasing and winning, said:

"Come, Lucy; why not be sensible and agree to a marriage with me? I am determined you shall marry me, whether you wish or not, so why not give your consent now and get away from this place. Surely it is not pleasant here?"

"No, it isn't pleasant here," she acknowledged, "but I would live and die here rather than consent to marry such a scoundrel as you have proven yourself to be!"

"So," he cried, "that is the way you look at it, eh? All right. Have your way about it, if you like; but I will wager a goodly sum that you will see the day, and soon, when you will wish you had not talked to be in any such fashion!"

"That is right, threaten me!" the girl said. "It is the unfeeling resource of a coward to threaten. You are safe in doing so, you know, as I am a helpless girl, while you are a great, big strong—not a man, brute!"

"Blame you!" the fellow cried. "You had best be careful what you say! You have tried my patience quite enough and I am in no mood to listen to abuse, even from your lips."

The man made a quick step forward and half drew back as if to strike the brave girl, who stood and stared him straight in the face without flinching. But he did not strike, coward though he was, and it was lucky for either him or Dick that he did not, for the youth had gathered himself together for action, and, with set teeth, was on the point of sliding the panel backward, leaping

into the room and attacking the man, but at that instant Holloway dropped his hand, and, with a sickly look of rage and half shame on his face, stepped back.

"Go, Thomas Holloway—coward! scoundrel! that you are! I told you I would die before I would consent to marry you, and I meant every word of it! Go!"

With a snarl of rage the infuriated man sprang forward, and so confident was Dick that he would this time strike the girl that he shoved the panel back, and, leaping out into the room, confronted the astonished Holloway.

"Hold!" Dick cried. "Touch the lady at your peril!"

CHAPTER XI.—The Escape.

The man stopped and stood stark still, gazing at Dick with underjaw dropped, a perfect picture of petrified amazement.

"W—who are you?" he gasped.

"I am one who will not stand by and see a lady struck by a brute!" replied Dick.

Instantly the man uttered a curse and leaped at the youth.

"I'll choke the life out of you!" he cried, but with a dexterous side movement Dick evaded the fellow's clutch. At the same time the thought flashed through Dick's mind. "He is a man stronger than I," and, realizing that he must resort to some other means than mere strength of arms if he came off victor in an encounter, Dick tripped the man, throwing him to the floor, and then, with a sudden inspiration, grabbed a coverlet from a cot at one side of the room, and, just as Holloway was scrambling to his feet, cursing and threatening, threw it over his head. Round and round the man's form Dick wrapped the coverlet, and then, with a dexterous trip, threw him to the floor a second time.

"Please lock the door, miss, so no one can get in," said Dick, and the girl quickly obeyed.

"Now is there anything that will do to tie his hands with?" Dick asked.

"Nothing, unless it would be the sheet, torn into strips," was the reply.

"That will do nicely, miss. Please tear it for me, and I will tie this gentleman up and put a stop to his crooked work for a time at least."

The girl hastened to obey, and it took her only a few minutes to reduce the sheet to strings, which, on being twisted, made very good substitutes for ropes.

Then Dick tied these around the man's wrists as tightly as he could and when he had finished Holloway lay there, helpless. Nor could he cry out, so as to be heard far, the coverlet effectually smothering his voice.

"There!" said Dick, with satisfaction, when this had been accomplished. "I guess Mr. Holloway won't bother you for a while, anyway."

"No; thanks to you, Mr. Parton," the girl breathed, seizing Dick's hand and pressing it warmly. "Oh, I thank you for your kindness in risking so much for my sake."

"It was nothing, miss," the youth said. "I am only too glad to have been able to render you a service. And now if I can escape from this place and take you with me, I shall be happy."

"Oh, if you only can," the girl breathed, clasp-

ing her hands nervously. "Do you think we stand a chance of escaping, Mr. Parton?"

"Call me Dick," said the youth. "I am not used to being called 'Mr. Parton.'"

"Very well—if you will call me Lucy."

"All right, Lucy; it's a bargain." And he went on:

"I am going to go out the way Holloway came in and reconnoitre. If I find there is not a good chance to get out that way we'll try the elevator route. You won't be afraid to stay here with him, will you?" indicating Holloway.

Then he unlocked the door, and, opening it a few inches, looked cautiously out. All he could see was a hallway which extended to right and left, and, opening the door wider, he stepped cautiously out and looked up and then down the hall. At the right hand it ended at a wall only a few yards distant, while to the left hand the hall extended quite a distance.

"This is clearly a basement," he thought, "and it is possible that we may be able to escape through it. I will go back and get Lucy and we'll try it, anyhow."

He hastened back to the room.

"Come, Lucy," he said; "I have found a way that promises a chance of escape. Bring the lamp and come along."

The girl lifted the lamp, and then, pausing, she looked at the man lying muffled up on the floor.

Dick closed and locked the door and then led the way along the hall to the door he had discovered, and, opening it, he took the lamp and led the way through into the room beyond. He closed the door as soon as Lucy had followed him through the opening, and then he held the lamp up and looked about him with interest.

"It is as I thought," he said, in a low tone. "This is the basement, and is unused, probably, judging from the looks of it, although it is cut up with partitions."

At last they came to the end of the basement room and moved along the wall till they came to an opening which let them through into the coal-cellar under the walk. There was no coal in there now, however, it being summer, but there were a few empty boxes, though whether sufficient for his purpose or not Dick did not know. He set the lamp on the floor, however, and, one after another, brought the boxes and piled them under the coal-hole.

Dick placed the largest one underneath and graduated them on up, the smallest being placed on the top. This done, Dick mounted to the top of the pyramid of boxes, and, reaching up, he pushed against the iron covering.

It would not move, and the youth tried again, with no better success, and he got down, looking disappointed.

"There's another one yonder," said Lucy, and Dick moved his boxes and tried it, this time with success. Pushing the iron covering upward and to one side, Dick pulled himself up through the hole, to find that he was at the side of the building instead of in front the "Standard Hotel" being on a corner. The passers-by eyed the youth curiously as he pulled himself up through the hole, and when he lay flat down upon his stomach and reached down through the opening, several persons stopped to see what he was going to do. Dick paid no attention to them, but told Lucy to climb up on top of the boxes, which she did, and

then he seized her up-stretched hand and lifted her out through the hole.

Just then some one clapped Dick on the shoulder and he whirled quickly in alarm, to see a big policeman standing beside him.

"Yez an' dhe gurrul are undher arrist!" the policeman said.

"Under arrest! What for?" cried Dick.

"On suspicion, beforra! Oi do be t'inkin' as how yez are sneak thieves. Come along, now, widout inny fuss."

CHAPTER XII.—En Route for Bluefield.

"What do you mean?" asked Dick. "You have no right to do this."

"Have no roight, is it, yez say? Begorra, whin I see two people a-crawlin' out uv a coal-hole in broad daylight it's almost certain dhey have been up to some sneak thievin' buznness. Or t'ink dhey'll foind some silver sppoons on yez whun dhey s'arch yez at the sthation."

It was only a couple of blocks to the station, and the officer led the two up before the police judge with quite an important air.

"Shure an' it's a coople av sneak thieves Oi wur afther capturing, sur," he said, touching his hat. "Dhey crawled out av a coal-hole by dhe Standard Hotil, sur, an' Oi gathered thim in."

The judge, who was a gray-haired, kindly-featured man, eyed Dick and Lucy searchingly.

"I think you have made a mistake, Callahan," he said, quietly. "These young people are not thieves."

"Indeed we are not, sir!" cried Dick, eagerly. "I would like to explain, sir, if you please."

"I shall be glad to hear your explanation," the judge said, kindly. "Please be seated, miss," to Lucy.

The girl took a seat and then Dick went ahead and explained everything, telling all about his affair with Belmont, and then detailed the story of Holloway's persecution of Lucy.

The judge listened attentively, and there was an eager look on his face and a nervous, half-frightened look on that of the policeman, and when Dick had finished the judge looked at the officer and smiled.

Then he asked:

"You heard this young man's story?"

"Yis, sor."

"Well, how about it? Have you ever noticed any queer goings-on around the Standard Hotel?"

"No, sor; Oi have seen no quare goin's on, sur, but Oi seen a great minny crooked fellys arou' there—gamblers, 'con' men and the loike sur."

"Exactly. Well, I am confident this young man's story is straight, in which case that hotel is a regular thieves' rendezvous and gambling house, and it must be raided at the earliest possible moment, before the escape of these young people has been discovered. Telephone to the central station for a detail of twenty officers, Callahan."

The officer immediately called up headquarters and a squad of men went to the hotel.

It was a successful raid, a number of crooks and gamblers having been captured, and a lot of goods recovered, and the prisoners were taken and placed in jail, special charges having been pre-

ferred against Belmont by Dick and Holloway by Lucy.

Then Dick and Lucy were allowed to depart, but were told that they must appear on the following day, at one o'clock, as they were the main witnesses against all the prisoners, and against Belmont and Holloway in particular.

The matron at the station house, who had taken a liking to Lucy, invited the girl to go home with her and spend the night, and Lucy did so, Dick returning to his hotel.

Both were on hand next day and the cases were tried that afternoon. The majority of the men who had been captured were fined as gamblers, but Belmont and Holloway were each sentenced to five years in the penitentiary.

Dick got his money back and felt much better, as he had found it an unpleasant experience to be in a large city with practically no money.

There was no necessity of his finding Mr. Overton, as he had plenty of money, and would not have to borrow, and he decided to start that very evening for Bluefield, Montana.

"What are you going to do, Lucy?" he asked, as they were leaving the courtroom. "Are you going to stay in Chicago?"

"No, indeed!" the girl replied, with a shudder. "I have had enough of Chicago. I am going back to Montana—back home."

"Say," said Dick, eagerly, "why can't we go together? I'm going to Montana and I'm thinking of starting this evening."

"What!" the girl cried. "Oh, I'm so glad! Then we can go together, can't we?"

"Indeed we can, Lucy. Nothing in the world could give me greater pleasure than to have you for a companion for the trip."

"But isn't it a strange coincidence, our being headed for the same place?"

"Yes, but a pleasant one. Well, we will go to a hotel and get supper and take a train out this evening."

They made their way to a good hotel and had supper, and then they went on to the depot, where Dick bought two tickets to Bluefield, Montana, after which they boarded the Overland Express.

Thirty minutes later the lights of Chicago were disappearing behind them.

CHAPTER XIII.—"Red John and His Band."

Bluefield, Montana, was not on the railroad, being thirty miles inland, and when Dick and Lucy reached Chinook, from which point a stage coach made three trips a week, they found they were just in time to catch the stage, which left at nine o'clock sharp. They were the last ones to secure passage, however, and as there was just room enough in the stage for Lucy, it became necessary for Dick to ride up on the front seat, alongside the driver.

"How long have you been driving a stage in this part of the country?" asked Dick, after they had gone a mile or so.

"Be'n drivin' stage in ther Rockies this twenty year," the driver replied, cracking his whip about the ears of the off leader.

"Indeed?" remarked Dick. "Do you ever get tired of the scenery?"

"I got tired uv et wunst, yonker—thet is, I

thort I wuz tired uv et. I packed up an' went over inter Dukoty, whur et is ez flat ez er pancake. I thort I hed struck et rich. Theer wuz no hills nur mountings ter climb, an' et wuz dead eazy gittin' aroun', but I wuzn't theer more'n about two months afore a cyclone kim erlong an' blowed ther ranch whur I wuz workin' over inter the next county an' nigh about skeered me ter death. Theer wuz nothin' at all ter hol' ter when ther wind kim up, an' I told ther folks I guessed I'd go back ter ther mountings whur ther wind didn't blow so hard, an' whur a feller c'd ketch holt uv a saplin' ter save himself in case et did blow. I've be'n here ever sence an' heer I'll stay till I kick ther bucket fur good an' all. No more perary in mine, thank ye!"

"I have been used to a level country compared to this," he said, "and I fancy I should like the mountains best."

"I couldn't think uv livin' ennywhurs else, now, sonny. I've be'n heer too long ter think uv gittin' used ter ennythin' else but mountings."

"How long does it take to reach Bluefield?"

"We air due inter Bluefield at six o'clock."

Dick conversed with the driver and enjoyed hearing the fellow talk so much that the time fairly flew, and it was twelve o'clock and they had reached Cruger's Ranch, where dinner was to be eaten, almost before the youth knew it.

As soon as the stage came to a stop in front of the ranch Dick leaped to the ground and assisted Lucy from the stage and conducted her into the building, and they secured seats at the table among the first.

Dick and Lucy both did full justice to the meal, but busy as he was eating, the youth discovered a fact that gave him an uneasy feeling, though he could hardly think why. A dark-featured man, seemingly about forty years of age, with a full black beard and mustache, seemed to be watching Lucy closely. When the meal was ended the passengers returned to their seats in the stage, and presently fresh horses were hitched up and once more the stage was in motion.

"So fur so good," the driver said, half to himself, when they had been in motion a few minutes. "Now, if Red John doesn't interfere and delay us we will be all right."

"Who is 'Red John'?" asked Dick.

"He's a road agent—a feller who robs stages, er ruther ther passengers. He has a band and they do erbout ez they please aroun' heer, I'm a-tellin' ye!"

"Is this Red John a very bad fellow?"

"Well, erbout like ther average, I guess. He holds up ther stages an' ef ther passengers shells out prompt an' generous-like he is all peeches an' cream, but ef enny uv 'em gits crank-like an' shows signs uv balkin' he shows his teeth all similar ter a hyener. I reckon et hain't ther best policy in ther world ter try enny funny bizness with Red John."

"Whereabouts on the road does he usually appear?"

"Oh, enny ole place. He owns ther hull blamed trail, an' is liable ter pop up ennywhurs erlong ther line."

"Oh, that is it, eh?"

"Yep."

"Don't the passengers ever resist when these road agents put in an appearance?"

"Ef they happens ter be new ter ther West they

sometimes try ter resist," he said; "but et allus turns out bad fur 'em. Them road agents is mighty bad men ter fool, an' they would jes' ez leeve kill er man ez look at 'im."

Half an hour more passed, and then the driver turned to Dick and said:

"We're within six miles uv Bluefield. A mile furdur on, an' five miles frum ther camp is a deep gorge, no wider'n ther stage. Et's a quarter uv a mile long, an' theer is no sech thing ez gittin' away ef a gang wants ter stop us. Ef Red John intends ter hold us up this trip, he'll be apt ter do it theer, an' I advise ye, if ye wanten save yer spondulicks, ter hide most uv 'em."

Dick thanked the driver, and, taking his wallet out of his pocket, took most of the money out and secreted it in his shoe. He left a few dollars in the wallet, to throw off suspicion that he was holding back money. Then Dick watched eagerly for the gorge where, according to the driver, Red John was likely to put in an appearance. It was only about a fifteen minutes' drive, and then the stage reached and entered the gorge.

As the driver had said, it was at least a quarter of a mile long, very narrow, and the walls were steep and very high, it being several hundred feet to the top on either side. The stage moved through at a little faster pace, the horses being urged to a trot, and the farther end of the gorge had almost been reached and Dick was beginning to think they were to escape, when into the trail in front, from each side, at the end of the gorge, not more than thirty yards distant, suddenly rode at least a dozen horsemen, each and every one with a black mask over his face and with a Remington rifle in his hands, these being leveled at the stage.

"Halt, driver!" came the stern command. "Another turn of the wheels and you are a dead man!"

"Red John and his band!" the driver muttered to Dick, as he brought the stage to a standstill with a powerful tug at the lines and a vigorous "Whoa!"

CHAPTER XIV.—The Battle Between the Road Agents and Passengers.

"Halt, et is, ole boss!" the driver cried. "I ruther reckon ez how I hain't in no pertickler hurry jest now!"

"Which shows your sense!" the road agent chief said, he having ridden up close to the stage. "How many passengers, Jake?"

"Eight—seven men and a womern."

"Very good! Tell them to alight, Jake. Tell them in such a manner that they will not hesitate. Say to them that if they are not out of there in a hurry I will have my men riddle the old hearse with bullets!"

"All right," and, leaning over the edge of the coach, the driver cried out:

"Ever'buddy roll out! Red John, the road agent, is heer, an' he is in a hurry. He sez ef ye don't tumble out lively he'll shoot the old box full uv holes. Better git out, an' quick at thet!"

Instantly there was a confused murmur of dismay inside the coach, and then the door opened and Lucy Hopper got out. She quickly stepped to the side of the road and began climbing the

wall of the canyon, which, while steep, was not so steep but that she could climb up it.

"Hold on, young lady! Where are you going?" the road agent chief cried.

"Up out of the range of bullets, sir," the girl replied.

"Out of the range of bullets? There will be no bullets."

"Yes, there will be," was the reply from within the stage. "Thar's seven uv us in heer, all armed ter ther teeth, an' we don't purpose ter allow ourselves ter be robbed ef we know ourselves, an' we think we do. Nor, siree! Ef yer want our wealth, jest come an' git et, ye pesky red-headed robber, yel!"

"By jux! ther fellers in ther coach air goin' ter make a fight uv et!" the driver said. "Sech bein' the case, it becomes necessary fer me ter git outen harm's way. I sh'd advise ye ter do the same thing, younker. Ef ye stay up heer yer'll get filled plumb full of lead, I'm a-tellin' yel Thar's a-goin' ter be a lively ole circus aroun' here mighty quick!"

"Will Red John attack the men in the coach, do you think?" Dick asked, with interest.

"Will he? Well, I sh'd remark! He'll go fur 'em red-hot in a minnet!"

Then the driver scrambled down from the seat and hastily unhitched the horses and led them back down the gulch a distance of a hundred yards or so. Dick hardly knew what to do. He looked up the gulch to where the road agents were, then down it to where the driver was standing, holding the horses with one hand and beckoning to him with the other, and hesitated. He felt that, if there was to be a fight, if the passengers were to make a stand against the road agents, it was his duty to help them all he could. He could not do much, as his only weapon was a little thirty-two calibre revolver, but he could do something, and it was his duty, he felt, to do that something.

Just then the door of the coach opened and the dark-faced and bearded man Dick had seen watching Lucy while they were eating dinner at Cruger's stepped out onto the ground. Dick had his eyes on the fellow, and saw him make a motion with his hand, evidently a signal of some kind, and, turning his head quickly, the youth saw Red John give an answering wave. Then the dark-faced fellow sprang up the side of the gulch, and Dick noted with a thrill of alarm that he was making for Lucy. What did it mean? the youth asked himself, and, acting on the impulse of the moment, he leaped to the ground and bounded up the side of the gulch in pursuit of the man. The dark-faced fellow reached Lucy fifty yards ahead of the boy, and, seizing the girl in his arms, went onward up the steep slope as rapidly as possible. The girl uttered a shriek as the man grasped her.

"Help!" she cried. "Oh, Dick! Save me! Help!"

"I'm coming, Lucy!" Dick cried. "I'll save you!"

The man heard and redoubled his exertions, but Dick was exerting himself to the utmost, too, and having nothing to carry, and being, moreover, younger and more nimble than the man, was rapidly overhauling the fellow.

The man had not looked back, but he could hear Dick's foot-steps behind him and knew the youth was close upon him. So the instant he reached comparatively level ground he dropped the girl

and whirled to meet his pursuer. Dick had been closer than the man thought, and as the fellow faced about the youth was within arm's length of him, and his fist shot out, taking the scoundrel fairly between the eyes, knocking him down. As the fellow fell some underbrush caught in his beard and, to the astonishment of both the youth and Lucy, the beard came off. It was false!

"Tom King?" the girl exclaimed, in surprise.

"You know him, then?" Dick asked.

"Yes," and then as the fellow, who was a young man of about twenty-three, leaped to his feet, she cried, "Look out! He is a wicked fellow!"

Dick had had his eye on the man, however, and dealt him another severe clip before he could get straightened up, knocking him down again. And just then the sound of shooting came up from below.

"The road agents have attacked the passengers!" cried Dick. "Oh, I hope the passengers will get the better of the fight."

"So do I—look out!"

As Lucy shrieked out the last two words she gave the fallen man's hand a kick, thus saving Dick's life, for the fellow had drawn a revolver and would have shot the youth dead while still lying where he had fallen when knocked down by the boy's fist. The weapon was discharged, but the bullet went high above the youth's head, while the weapon itself flew out of the man's hand and several feet away, entirely out of his reach.

Instantly the fellow gave a whirl of his body, and, rolling over and over, reached the edge of the steep side of the gulch. With another whirl of his body the man went over the edge, and went rolling down the side of the canyon with great rapidity. When down a score of yards, however, the fellow managed to squirm around and stopped his descent sufficiently so that he got to his feet, and then he continued on down, running in an upright position.

They stepped to the edge of the descent and looked down. It was hard to say which side was likely to win. The road agents were close up to the coach and were firing into it at short range, while from the window of the coach came a cloud of smoke from the weapons of the passengers.

Bang! Bang! Bang! went the weapons, and presently the road agents whirled horses and rode away at a gallop, several of their number reeling in their saddles like drunken men; they were evidently badly wounded.

Then out from the coach leaped the men, yelling in triumph, and they fired another volley at the fleeing road agents.

Taking the girl's hand, Dick assisted her down the steep side of the gulch, reaching the coach just as the driver was hitching the horses to the vehicle.

"The road agents got licked, after all, didn't they?" Dick cried, and the driver nodded assent.

"They shorely did," he said. "Gol darned ef I 'xpected et, eether. I'm consarned glad uv et, though. Mebby the cusses'll let ther stages along fur a spell."

"If they were to run up against a snag like this oftener it would be apt to put a stop to the business, wouldn't it?"

"Et would hev a discouragin' effect, sonny," was the reply. "But wotever did thet black-muzzled cuss run up ther slope an' grab ther gal fur?" he asked.

"I don't know," replied Dick. "I simply know he was one of the members of the road agent band. I saw him signal the rest."

"Sho!" exclaimed the driver. "Is that so?"

"It is. I think he wished to make the girl a prisoner and hold her for ransom, as she is the owner of a valuable ranch a few miles from Bluefield."

"Jest ez like's not. Oh, them cusses is up ter all sorts uv games ter raise ther spondulicks."

"They failed all around this time, however."

"Thet's wot they did!"

Then the driver, having finished hitching up, came around to inquire if any of the passengers were killed or badly wounded. He received the information that two were wounded, but not severely, and that no one had been killed, and with a "Thet's good luck!" he mounted to his seat, Dick sprang up beside him, and the coach rolled on its way toward Bluefield.

CHAPTER XV.—Lucy at Home.

"Thet's the furst time Red John ever got ther wurst uv a fight on the trail," said the driver, after they had gone a ways.

"Is that so?" remarked Dick.

"Yes, an' I guess he wouldn't have got ther wurst uv et this time on'y fur thet cowboy in there. He is a holy terror ter fight."

On rolled the stage, and feeling happy now that the road agents had been met and defeated and were no more to be feared, Dick enjoyed the ride immensely. When the stage had reached a point within a couple of miles of Bluefield Lucy stuck her head out of the window in the door of the coach and cried:

"Driver!"

"Yes, miss. Wot is et, miss?"

"Will you please stop and let me out here?"

"Certainly, miss, but I thort——"

"That I was going to Bluefield?"

"Yes."

"I did intend to do so, but have changed my mind. My ranch is only a mile from the trail and I can walk it easily. I am so anxious to get home that I cannot bear to think of going past and on into the town."

"Oh, all right, miss," the driver cried, and, leaping down, he opened the coach door. Dick was down in an instant, too, and assisted Lucy to alight. Then the driver lifted the girl's grip out and set it on the ground.

"Et's purty heavy, miss," he said. "It'll be a purty big load fur ye."

"I will carry it," said Dick, quickly. "I am going to see you safely home, Lucy."

"That will be asking too much of you, Dick," she said, "after all that you have already done for me."

"Not a bit of it," the youth declared. "It will be a great pleasure, Lucy."

"Ye kin bet et will, miss," the driver said with a grin and a sly wink at the inmates of the stage. "I really would enjoy kerryin' yer grip twicet thet far myself, miss, et I didn't hev ter drive ther ole stage. Ye jest take ther younker up at his offer an' don't fret erbout him at all!"

"Very well, sir," Lucy said, smiling. "I shall be only too glad to have you go with me, Dick."

"All right; it's settled, then," said the youth, and, picking up Lucy's grip, he and the girl, after saying "good-by," started to leave the trail to go in the direction of Lucy's ranch, when the driver called out:

"Wot erbout yer own grip, younker? Et's here yit."

"Leave it with the landlord of the hotel," the youth replied. "I'll be there this evening."

"All right," and then the driver climbed up onto the seat, cracked his whip, and away the stage rolled.

There was a faint trail leading away from the main one at right angles, and Dick and Lucy followed this trail.

"It isn't more than a mile to the ranch house," the girl said, "and we will be on my land in a short distance farther. Oh, it seems so good to be back here once more."

"I should think it would," assented Dick, "after what you had to go through in Chicago."

"Yes, indeed! I shall never venture to a city again unless accompanied by some one amply capable of protecting me. A simple country girl has no business in a great city."

Presently they came out of the rough ground into the edge of a beautiful valley, seemingly five or six miles long.

"This is Pleasant Valley," Lucy said. "There are just six ranches in the valley. This one is mine and that house you see yonder is my home."

The girl clasped her hands, and, stopping, gazed at the house with eyes swimming in tears, yet with a happy light in their depths.

"Home!" she breathed. "Home again! Oh, Dick, I am so glad to get back to my home!"

They walked quite rapidly and fifteen minutes later reached the house and Lucy was clasped in the arms of the old housekeeper, who had been like a mother to the girl for many years.

"Oh, ye poor, dear little girl! Where did you come from, an' how did ye get here?" the woman asked, and then Lucy hastily explained, after which she introduced Dick, who was given a hospitable welcome.

"Any one who has been kind to Miss Lucy is sure of a welcome here!" she cried, and then neither she nor Lucy would hear of Dick's going on to Bluefield that evening.

"You must stay for supper and all night, too!" the woman cried.

"Yes, and then one of the boys will go on horseback with you in the morning," Lucy added. "It is just as cheap to ride as to walk."

So Dick had to stay and, to tell the truth, he had no desire to hasten away. He was already looking forward to his parting with Lucy with feelings of sorrow, and a queer, tugging sensation at the heart. Somehow the beautiful girl into contact with whom he had been so strangely thrown had become dear to him. Dick was only a youth, and he did not think of love, but he knew that it was going to be hard to have to go away and leave the girl, perhaps never to see her again. But would he never see her again? Dick made up his mind that he would. Dick remained at the ranch over night, and after breakfast next morning he got ready to leave. A cowboy was out in front of the ranchhouse holding a couple of horses, and it only remained for the youth to say good-by. The housekeeper, with rare tact, shook hands with Dick and bade him

good-by, and then, saying she had something to look after in the kitchen, hastened away, leaving the youth and the girl in the front room alone. Dick stepped forward and took Lucy's hand.

"I must go back East at once," he said, rapidly, "but I am coming West again, Lucy, just as soon as I can get things in shape so that I can do so, if—if—"

"If what, Dick?" the girl, asked, looking up at the youth, her voice trembling.

"If you say for me to do so, Lucy. Do you say so?"

For an instant the girl looked down, blushing like a rose, and then she looked shyly up at the youth and said:

"I do say so, Dick!"

Her form was trembling and her voice was scarcely above a whisper, and, filled with a great happiness, Dick Parton did what he, a bashful, diffident boy as a rule had never done before, he kissed Lucy again and again!

Then, kissing the beautiful girl again, Dick said good-by and hastened from the house. Mounting the horse, he waved his hand to Lucy, who was standing on the piazza, and was away at a gallop with his cowboy companion. There was not a happier youth in all Montana that morning than Dick Parton.

CHAPTER XVI.—Dick Is Surprised.

On reaching Bluefield, Dick went at once to the hotel. It transpired that the landlord of the hotel was one of the old settlers, and not only knew everybody who lived in the town now, but everybody who had lived there at any time within the past twenty years. This was just what Dick wanted, and he asked the landlord if he had ever known any one named Charles Romayne.

"I remember Charlie Romanye well," he said. "He lived here several years."

"He died here, did he not?"

"Yes. Let me see; it has been sixteen years since he died."

"Did he leave any children?"

"Yes; a boy—a babe, one year old."

"What became of the child and its mother? Do they live here yet?"

"Lord bless you—no! That woman, my boy, was not the right stripe. At any rate, I never liked her. Within a week after her husband's death she packed up and left town. 'Wasn't going to live in a little one-horse place like this!' she said. She was 'going back East.' And she did."

"Did you know the name of the town and State she went to?"

"Yes. Mathersville, New Jersey."

"Thank you," said Dick, and, having learned all he cared to know, he was ready to get out of the town as quickly as possible.

Dick took the 10:30 stage out of Bluefield and arrived in Chicago two days after. He remained over night and spent the next day at the World's Fair. He felt, however, that this was as much time as he could legitimately give to pleasure, and he took the night train for the East. He arrived at Trenton, New Jersey, the next afternoon. Here he changed cars and an hour later arrived at Mathersville. As at Bluefield, so was it here. The landlord of the hotel where Dick stopped was an old resident. When Dick asked him if he remem-

bered a woman by the name of Romaine who had come to the place sixteen years ago, he shook his head.

"Romaine—Romaine," he repeated, slowly, and then suddenly he started.

"Why, yes, I remember her now," he said. "She was a widow with one child—a boy a year old."

"Yes?" assented Dick. "What became of her? Does she live here still?"

The landlord shook his head.

"No," he said. "She and her son left here soon after her husband's death, four years ago. I think they went to New York City."

"Her husband! Then she married again?"

"Yes—the second year after she came here. Married a well-to-do man named Fairchild. Poor Tom!" shaking his head sadly. "He got himself into hot water. The woman was a terror and led him a terrible life. Incidentally she spent all his money, too, so that when he died there was little left."

Dick started when he heard the name pronounced.

"Fairchild!" he cried. "Was her son's name Guy?"

The landlord nodded.

"He was a chip of the old block," he said. "He inherited all his mother's bad traits, and none of his father's, I should judge—that is, if his father had any good traits of character."

Dick was surprised almost beyond measure. He was confident he had traced down the woman who had proven false to her troth, plighted to Mr. Romaine, and found her to be no other than the Mrs. Fairchild he had become acquainted with at Cranbury, when she and Guy had spent the summer there. One thing he could not understand, however; if they were the same, Guy's real name was Romaine. Why had he changed it? There was an evening train out of Mathersville and Dick took it, arriving in New York City at six o'clock. He went direct to the home of Mrs. Curtis and found some men carrying the furniture downstairs and depositing it on the sidewalk while Mrs. Curtis stood by, sobbing. Bob was not there, not having gotten in yet from his work.

"What does this mean, Mrs. Curtis?" Dick asked. "Why are they moving your furniture out?"

"Oh, Dick, I am so glad you have come!" the poor woman cried. "I am sorry, though, that you find us in this plight. The owner of this tenement ordered us to vacate and his men are moving our things out because I owe him four dollars rent."

"Is the landlord here?" asked the boy.

"Yes," and she pointed him out.

Dick went over to him; handed the scoundrel eight dollars, one month's rent in advance and told him to put the furniture back in the room.

The owner of the building hesitated for a few moments and then gave the order. The poor woman was profuse in her thanks. They had hardly gotten upstairs before Bob burst into the room.

"Hello, Dick! Glad to see you back!" he greeted. Then to his mother:

"Mother, what does this mean? Why is everything torn up? What are our things doing down on the pavement?"

Mrs. Curtis told him, and a very angry boy Bob was when he knew all. He wanted to go down and give the landlord a "piece of his mind," but, on the advice of his mother and Dick, re-

frained. The things that had been carried downstairs were soon all back in their accustomed places, and then Mrs. Curtis set about getting supper. Dick went out and bought some baker's bread, some cookies, a nice steak. Some cheese and pickles, and when supper was ready they sat down to a meal fit for a king. All did full justice to it, too, for they were hungry, and it was not often that Mrs. Curtis and Bob sat down to such a meal. Dick decided to wait till morning to visit Mr. Romaine, and, being tired, went to bed early. He did not get to sleep very soon, however, as Bob insisted on being told everything Dick had seen at the World's Fair.

CHAPTER XVII.—Dick Reports.

Immediately after breakfast next morning Dick started for the home of the old hermit of the Palisades. Dick took a Ninth avenue elevated railway train and went to the north end of the island. The old man's boat was at its moorings when he reached the river, and Dick leaped in. Casting off, he bent to the oars, and in a few minutes was at the opening leading through the bluff. Rowing in, he came to a stop at the foot of the path leading up to Mr. Romaine's house. Springing ashore, Dick tied the boat's painter to the stake driven there for that purpose, and, walking to the house, knocked on the door. The door was opened at once by the old man. There was a look of anger on his face, but this gave way instantly to a look of delight as he saw who his visitor was.

"What, you, Dick!" he cried. "Come in. Come in. You don't know how glad I am to see you," and he seized the boy's hand and shook it energetically.

"Sit down," indicating a chair. "When did you get back?"

"Last night," Dick replied, as he seated himself and removed his hat. "I did not reach the city until evening, so waited till this morning to come to you with my report."

The old man nodded vigorously.

"Quite right," he said; "quite right. And you—what success did you have? Did you learn the whereabouts of—the woman and my nephew? Are they living?"

The old gentleman was eager and excited. Dick was sorry for him, as he knew that Guy was not the boy his uncle would have him to be. He must tell the truth, however.

"They are both living," he replied.

"Did you see them. The boy—my nephew; what do you think of him?"

"I did not see them while on my trip. But I have seen them often. They live in New York City."

The old man looked puzzled.

"I don't understand," he said. "If you knew them then you knew them before you started on the trip. Why did you not tell me so then? Wanted to take a trip, did you?"

"You do me an injustice, sir. I did not know the woman and boy I am speaking of were the woman and boy you wished to know the whereabouts of until I returned. She had married again and her son had taken the name of her second husband. Her name is Fairchild now and your nephew's name is Guy."

The old man extended his hand, which Dick accepted.

"I beg your pardon, my boy," he said. "I am glad my first estimate of you was correct. I was too hasty and am very sorry I said what I did."

"That is all right," smiled Dick. "Say no more about it."

"Very well. Now, tell me about my nephew. Is he—does he take after his mother?"

Dick hesitated.

"I really do not like to say, sir," he replied. "It would be better, I think, as they are so near, for you to make the acquaintance of Guy and form your own estimate. He works in a clothing store on Broadway, near Tenth street."

The old man smiled sadly.

"Your refusal to say anything is sufficient," he said. "I doubt not the boy is much like his mother. However, I will act on your suggestion. I will call at the store and make the young man's acquaintance. Give me the address."

Dick gave the number of the store where Guy worked and then arose.

"I will go now, sir," he said.

"Wait," said the old man, and he went into an inner room. Returning a moment later, he handed Dick a roll of bills.

"There is a hundred dollars," he said. "That is to pay for your services."

"But you have already paid me," objected Dick. "Look at this suit of clothes; and then I have more than ten dollars left of the money you gave me to pay the expenses of my trip."

"Keep that," quietly, "and take this also. What you have done is worth it. I will not take a refusal. You must take the money."

Dick had been in such a hurry to report to Mr. Romaine that he had thought of nothing else, but now, while on his way downtown, after crossing back to the island, he noted the absence of much of the noise and confusion incident to the great metropolis, and the thought came to him that it was Sunday. It was a beautiful day, and, happy in the possession of his hundred dollars, and feeling at peace with all mankind, Dick decided to celebrate his good fortune. After some deliberation Dick decided that a trip up the Hudson on one of the palatial excursion steamers would be about the proper thing.

"But Mrs. Curtis and Bob must go with me," he said to himself. "I'll go straight home and make them get ready."

But Mrs. Curtis would not consent to go. She had a natural fear of water and said she would not go on board a boat for anything in the world.

"No, Dick," she said, "I will stay in the city and go to church. Bob may go, however."

Half an hour later the two boys were at the North River pier and buying tickets—Dick paying for both—they went on board the boat. They went onto the upper deck and walked slowly forward. As they did so Dick's eyes fell upon a familiar face. True, he had seen the face only once, and then during a period of great excitement, yet it had been indelibly stamped upon his memory and he would have recognized it anywhere. It was the face of Agnes Norwood, the girl whom he had saved from a horrible death beneath the cars at the Brooklyn entrance to the Brooklyn Bridge, on the morning of the day he arrived in New York City, two weeks before. A glance at her companions, a gentleman and lady, showed Dick that

the girl was with her parents. A queer sensation came over the boy as he looked at the girl who owed him so much. He wondered if she would recognize him. He hardly knew whether he wished her to or not. He did not feel like meeting her father, the man who had treated him so crustily when he called at the store, thinking to find Alfred Stubbs, the deacon's nephew; and feeling thus, he decided to make no sign. If the girl did not recognize him, he would not make himself known. But she recognized him. He saw her look at him curiously at first. Then she gave a start and looked at him searchingly. In an instant her face lighted up and Dick knew he was recognized, but he was hardly prepared for what followed.

"Oh, papa!" she continued, pulling Dick forward, "this is the boy who saved my life! Thank him, papa!"

Mr. Norwood looked at Dick closely and then started.

"I believe I have seen this boy before," he said. "Are you not the boy who called at my place of business a couple of weeks ago looking for work?"

"I am that boy," replied Dick, with quiet dignity. He had not forgotten his treatment at the gentleman's hands.

"And you were at that time the savior of my daughter," Mr. Norwood went on. "Dick—I believe you said your name was Dick?"

"Dick Parton—yes, sir."

"Dick, I am going to apologize for the treatment I gave you at that time. Business troubles were worrying me. I owe a greater debt than I can repay, but I shall do all I can. First, let me ask, have you found employment?"

"Nothing permanent," said Dick. "I have just returned from a trip to the West, but I have nothing special to do, except to sell papers and run errands."

"You are worth a great deal more than you can earn in that way," decidedly. "How would you like a position in my store as salesman?"

Dick's eyes brightened.

"I should like it first rate, sir!" he said.

"Good! Then you may consider yourself in my employ. Report for work at seven to-morrow morning. Your wages will be ten dollars a week."

"I am afraid I cannot earn so much, sir," Dick demurred. "You had better not pay me so much until you have given me a trial and seen what I can do."

"I should do that way in the majority of instances," smiling, "but in your case it is different. I know that you will have no difficulty in earning your salary."

Awed by the fine clothes and other evidences of wealth on the part of Dick's friends, Bob kept away from them; nor did he rejoin Dick until after Mr. and Mrs. Norwood and Agnes had left the boat, which they did at Poughkeepsie, where they were going to spend the time intervening before the return of the boat with friends.

CHAPTER XVIII.—Bob Gets a Job.

The boys now turned their attention to the enjoyment of the present. The beautiful scenery, changing constantly, was a pleasure to look upon, while the music of the band and the joyous talk and laughter of the crowd made the boys feel strangely happy. They enjoyed themselves hugely, and although tired by the trip, were almost

sorry when it was drawing to a close. At Poughkeepsie Mr. and Mrs. Norwood and Agnes came aboard the steamer and greeted Dick pleasantly.

"Did you have a pleasant day, Dick?" asked the girl.

"Oh, very much, indeed," the boy declared. "Bob and I have had a fine time."

"Bob? Who is he?"

"I forgot that you did not know him. He is a friend of mine. Bob is a good boy, I tell you. He lives with his mother and works hard to help support her. I board with them."

"A good boy, eh? Those are the kind of boys I like to see. Introduce him, Dick. I wish to become acquainted with him."

Blushing and awkward-appearing, Bob was led forward by his friend and introduced. He got through the ordeal fairly well, though one could see he was ill at ease.

"So you are Dick's friend, eh?" remarked Mr. Norwood, shaking Bob's hand cordially. "I am glad to know you."

With all his backwardness, Bob was intensely practical and shrewd enough to take advantage of favorable circumstances. His action on this occasion proved that.

"I'm glad to know you, too, sir," he said. And then he continued:

"Dick tells me he's to work for you."

"Yes, I am glad to say he is. He begins in the morning."

"I know it. We was talking about it. Say, you—you couldn't give me a place in your store, could you? Of course I don't want to be a salesman, like Dick. I ain't smart enough. But I'm a good worker, and if you had any other kind of work I could do, I'd like it. I'd like to work in the same store with Dick."

Bob paused, exhausted by his long speech, and smiling, Mr. Norwood said:

"I need just such a boy. You can go to work in the morning, if you wish. You will work in the wholesale department, and will have to help pack and unpack goods, and such work as that. Your pay at first will be five dollars a week."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" cried Bob, delightedly.

More conversation was indulged in, and then, when the boat arrived at its landing, Dick and Bob parted from their friends and went straight home. Mrs. Curtis was delighted when she found out of the boy's good fortune, and as a sort of celebration they had an extra good supper.

CHAPTER XIX.—Dick and Bob At Work.

Dick and Bob were at Mr. Norwood's establishment at half-past six next morning. Mr. Norwood arrived at seven, in company with the manager of the retail department.

"Ah! Good-morning, Dick. Good-morning, Bob," he said, cordially. "I am glad to see you here on time. Punctuality is a good trait, boys. Mr. Brewster, let me make you acquainted with my young friends here. This is Dick Parton, the boy who saved the life of my daughter—you heard me speak of it. He is to be a salesman. I place him under your charge. I want you to be friends, Dick, with Mr. Brewster, who will instruct you in your duties."

The two shook hands and then Bob was introduced.

"Bob will work in the wholesale department," Mr. Norwood explained.

Mr. Norwood went to his private office, and Mr. Brewster conducted Dick to the sundries department, which was fairly large.

"I will start you in here," he said. "We need another salesman in this department. The articles are small and easily sold. You will learn the rudiments of the salesman's art here, and as you learn I will advance you to the hat, shoe and finally, perhaps, if you show exceptional ability, to the clothing department. Ah, here comes Mr. Saunders. He is at the head of this department. He will instruct you in your duties."

Dick was introduced to Mr. Saunders, who, impressed by the boy's bright appearance, took a liking to him and put himself to considerable trouble to instruct Dick in his work.

Presently Guy Fairchild appeared. He came sauntering along, as if he had all day to get to his work. The fact that he was twenty minutes late did not seem to worry him a bit.

"Morning, Saunders," he said, nodding carelessly in the direction of the head of the department. And then his eyes fell upon Dick and he stopped and stared in astonishment.

"Good-morning, Guy," said Dick, pleasantly. "You look surprised."

"What are you doing here?" he asked, without answering Dick's greeting.

"Can't you see?" laughed Dick. "I'm working. Mr. Norwood has given me a place."

"I hope you didn't presume on your acquaintance with me to ask Mr. Norwood for a place," he said.

"You may relieve your mind of any anxiety on that score," Dick said, quietly. "I got my place without even so much as mentioning your name."

"I am glad of that," said Guy, with a distainful air.

"No more so than I am," retorted Dick.

No more was said, and some customers appearing, all three became busy. They were kept so for some time and nearly half the forenoon had gone when Dick was startled by hearing a familiar voice addressed to Mr. Saunders the query:

"Does a boy named Guy Fairchild work here?"

Dick looked up and saw Mr. Romaine standing before the counter. Dick was surprised. Mr. Romaine was dressed in an old threadbare suit of clothes, and had a generally dilapidate appearance.

"That is Mr. Fairchild yonder," answered Mr. Saunderson, indicating Guy, who stood near.

Approaching Guy, he held out his hand.

"How do you do, Guy," he said. "I am your uncle, the brother of your father."

Guy looked at the old man in astonishment. He utterly ignored the outstretched hand.

"My uncle!" he said, with a somewhat supercilious air and disdainful look at the old man's shabby clothing.

"Yes. Perhaps you have heard your mother speak of Thomas Romaine?"

"Never have," he said. "Is that your name?"

"It is."

"Then how could you be my uncle? My name is Fairchild."

"You are wrong," he said. "That is the name you have got by since a child, but your real

name is Romaine. You are the son of a younger brother of mine. Your mother has evidently kept you in ignorance of your own identity for some reason."

"I don't believe you," he declared. "The name of Fairchild is good enough for me. I don't think I should like to change it for Romaine, especially if I would have to claim relationship with you. If you were my uncle I shouldn't wish any one to know it."

"Perhaps, if you knew all, you might not be so unwilling to acknowledge me as your uncle, after all," the old man said. "I certainly am satisfied, if you are."

"What do you mean?" asked Guy, with a show of interest.

"Oh, nothing," smiling. "By the way, if you do not believe my statement that I am your uncle, just speak to your mother when you go home to-night. Ask her if it is not true."

The old gentleman was turning away when Guy, struck by a sudden thought, called to him to stop.

"His story might be true," he said to himself. "He may be my uncle, and who knows but he might be rich and would make me his heir? I've read of such things in stories."

But the thought had come too late. His uncle had seen him as he was, vain, proud, selfish.

"Will you give me your address, sir?" Guy asked, as the old man paused. He spoke with a respect occasioned by the sudden thought that had come to him. "In case my mother verifies what you say, she might wish to communicate with you."

"My address? It doesn't matter," he said. "In case your mother wishes to communicate with me, she can do so through Dick, there," indicating our hero. "Good-morning," and Mr. Romaine walked out of the store, leaving Guy staring in open-mouthed astonishment, first after him and then at Dick.

"Say," remarked Guy, presently, addressing Dick, "did you hear what he said?"

"I did," replied Dick, smiling.

"Well, what I want to know," said Guy, half angrily, "is what do you know about that old man?"

CHAPTER XX.—Guy Learns the Truth.

"I know this much about him," said Dick. "He is your uncle. More, however, I will not say."

And, although Guy importuned him to tell more, Dick would not do so. He attended strictly to business and refused to talk.

The first words Guy uttered on reaching home that evening, and after having thrown himself at full length on a sofa, were:

"Mother, is my name Romaine?"

"What do you mean?" she asked. "What kind of nonsense are you talking?"

Guy looked at his mother in a knowing manner.

"Is it nonsense?" he asked, half insolently.

"Of course it is. Your name is Fairchild—isn't it? Haven't you always been called by that name?"

"Yes, I have always been called Guy Fairchild. But, if that is my name, what did that old codger who came into the store today mean by saying my name was Romaine and that he was my uncle?"

Mrs. Fairchild became greatly excited.

"Did he—did a man do that?" she cried.

"Yes. And he told me to ask you if you remembered Thomas Romaine."

"He did?"

"How old a man was he?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't know. Sixty, I should say. Perhaps more. His hair and beard were gray."

"How was he dressed—well or poorly?"

"He was dressed shabbily," Guy said.

"He did not look as if he were—well, prosperous, then?"

"No," he said. "I can't say that he did—that is, he didn't to-day."

"What do you mean?" quickly.

"Why, I mean that I don't believe he wore his best clothes to-day. In fact, he admitted as much and intimated that his visit to me was simply to size me up; to see what kind of youth I was, in fact."

"He did!" excitedly. "And how did you treat him? I hope you didn't do or say anything to make him take a dislike to you?"

Guy flushed slightly.

"Well, I can't say," he said, half sullenly. He looked shabby and I didn't believe he was my uncle, so what could you expect? I didn't make any very bad breaks, though."

"I am glad of that, for, Guy, that man is your uncle. Your father was his younger brother and your name is Guy Romaine."

The woman sat down and wrote a long letter to Mr. Romaine, asking his forgiveness, protesting that she had long since seen the wrong she had committed that she had suffered terribly on account of it, and finished by begging him to call on her and have a talk. Guy was at his place on time the following morning, much to Mr. Saunders' surprise. He was unusually friendly toward Dick, too, and the latter was not surprised when Guy drew a letter from his pocket.

"My mother wrote this last night," he said. "It is to my uncle. She said that she did not wish to trouble you and that you might give me uncle's address, so that I could deliver it myself."

"Oh, it will be no trouble," said Dick, smiling. "I will take it to Mr. Romaine this evening after the store closes."

As soon as the store closed Dick set out for the home of Mr. Romaine. Half an hour later Dick arrived at Mr. Romaine's home. Knocking, he was admitted.

"Ah, Dick, I am glad to see you," Mr. Romaine greeted, shaking Dick's hand. "Be seated."

"I bring a letter for you," said Dick, and he handed it to the old gentleman. "It is from Mrs. Fairchild."

"I thought she would write," he said. Then, seating himself, he opened the letter and read it.

Mr. Romaine studied for some time and then turned his eyes on his companion.

"Dick," he said, "thanks to you, I have been enabled to see my nephew. That was all I wanted. I did not wish to see his mother; I do not now. I shall never see her again. Had Guy proved to be a good, honest, commonsense boy, like you, for instance, I should have made him my heir—would have made him rich—but he did not prove such. He is just like his mother—vain, conceited, bigoted, avaricious. I shall do nothing for him. I want nothing to do with either of them."

"shall answer this letter to that effect, Dick, and you shall deliver it for me."

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Romaine got paper, pen and ink and began writing. He kept at it for twenty minutes, then he blotted the sheet, folded it, placed it in an envelope; then addressed it and gave it to Dick. Dick left the house and proceeded to his boat. It was now nearly dark. Had it not been so he would have seen a boat with one person in it just entering the river through the little channel. The occupant of the boat was Guy Fairchild. He had followed Dick to Mr. Romaine's home and had had his ear to the keyhole of the door during the whole of the conversation between Dick and the old gentleman.

"So, the old gent is rich, eh?" the youth muttered. "And he is going to give mother and me the cold shoulder, eh? Well, we'll see."

Dick handed Guy the letter next morning and was surprised to see that the youth did not seem to be excited over it nor appear eager to know the contents. At noon that day Dick made a startling discovery. In common with the majority of the employees of the house, he brought a lunch with him each day, to be eaten at noon, thus saving the trouble and expense of going out to a restaurant. He was in the habit of eating in the basement, it being nice and quiet there. This basement was used as a storage room for empty boxes and odds and ends of all kinds. Down the centre of the basement was piled a carload of wrapping paper, the heavy bales being piled one on top of the other until it was higher than one's head. Dick was seated on the farther side of this wall of paper eating his lunch when he heard footsteps coming down the stairs leading to the basement. Still he thought nothing strange of the affair until the steps came back into the basement to a point opposite him on the other side of the paper. Then he heard voices. Dick started. He recognized the voices as belonging to Martin Noland, Guy Fairchild's uncle on his mother's side, who was head salesman of the notions department and Guy Fairchild.

"What I wanted to talk to you about was this," said Guy. "You know I told you about that uncle of mine, who was in the store day before yesterday."

"Yes. Go on."

"He lives in an old house in a little open place in the Palisades, across the river," Guy went on. "Martin, Uncle Romaine is an immensely rich man."

"He is?"

"He is, but, Martin, he does not propose we shall have his money. Had I proven to be a 'good honest boy like Dick Parton,'" bitterly, "who is evidently uncle's idol, he would have made me his heir, but since he has found me to be 'vain, arrogant, selfish, avaricious,' and so forth, to use his own words, he will leave me nothing."

There was a moment's silence and then Guy spoke again:

"—Martin, we will never get a cent of that money, unless—"

"Unless what?" from his uncle.

"Unless," lowering his voice, but still not so low that Dick could not hear every word distinctly; "unless we go and take it!"

There was silence for a few moments. Noland was evidently pondering the subject.

"Do you think he keeps his money at home?" the name asked presently.

"I am sure he does."

"Is it share and share alike if I go in with you?"

"Of course."

"All right; it's settled, then. I'll go into the thing. When shall we do the job?"

"To-night would be as good a time as any."

Then the two left the basement, going upstairs. Dick sat perfectly still for some moments, too stupefied with astonishment and horror to move. Then he aroused himself.

"So they are going to rob Mr. Romaine!" he muttered. "What scoundrels—and Guy is the worst. Well, perhaps they will be successful; perhaps they won't. We will see. I think I shall have to take a hand in this affair myself."

CHAPTER XXI.—Dick Warns Mr. Romaine.

Dick went home with Bob, as usual. After supper he put on his hat, and, going to his room, took a small pocket pistol out of his trunk and put it in his pocket. Bob did not ask Dick where he was going. He knew that if Dick wished him to know he would tell of his own accord. It was quite dark when Dick arrived at the home of Mr. Romaine, but the old gentleman was not yet in bed.

"Why, Dick, my boy, is it you?" he exclaimed. "Come in. I'm glad to see you, but am surprised to see you here again so soon after your other visit."

"I came on important business," said Dick.

And then Dick went on and told Mr. Romaine all. The old gentleman was astonished.

"Well, thanks to your warning, we will be ready for them."

At eleven o'clock Mr. Romaine extinguished the light.

They sat there, silent for the most part, but conversing occasionally in whispers, until perhaps three-quarters of an hour had passed, and then they heard a noise at one of the windows in the rear. The old man took hold of Dick's arm and silently pulled the boy across the room, where they took up their position against the wall, close to the door, and so that it, in opening, would be between them and the would-be robbers. Presently the knob turned and the door pushed open a few inches. It remained thus for a few moments and then it was pushed still farther open. There was another short pause, and then, as if confident the coast was clear, the door was pushed wide open, and, lantern in hand, Martin Noland entered the room, closely followed by Guy Fairchild.

"Villains! What are you doing here?"

As Mr. Romaine gave utterance to these words, Noland stopped suddenly, as if shot at, while Guy Fairchild gave a cry of terror. Then as his eyes fell upon his uncle and Dick, holding the revolvers covering himself and partner in crime, Guy's nerves completely failed him. He fell upon his knees on the floor.

"Oh, don't shoot!" he cried. "Oh, uncle, spare me! Have mercy on me! I didn't mean to do

anything out of the way! I—it was Martin, here, my uncle—mother's brother. He put me up to it! I——"

"Spare your words," Mr. Romaine said. "One is as bad as the other."

An angry, sullen look was on Noland's face.

"I know that," he said. "I am to blame all right. I am sorry I went into the affair, now that it has gone wrong. But, now that you have us, what are you going to do with us?"

Mr. Romaine pondered a few moment and decided to let the two go. It might not be just the thing, he thought, but then again perhaps it would be a lesson and they would lead an honest life in the future.

"Yes, as it is your first offense, I will let you go," said Mr. Romaine. "Keep clear of crime in the future."

Mr. Romaine unlocked and opened the front door, and the crestfallen worthies passed out of the house and into the darkness. Mr. Romaine watched them by the light of their own lantern until they passed through the channel into the river, and then he closed and locked the door.

"You must stay all night with me, Dick," he said.

Dick agreed and left early next morning.

He was at his place in the store on time next morning, but neither Guy nor his uncle put in an appearance. About the middle of the forenoon an old gentleman and a young girl approached the counter and Dick started in surprise, as he recognized his acquaintances of the Western trip, Mr. Overton and granddaughter, Ethel.

Ethel took Dick's hand and squeezed it in impulsive, girlish fashion.

"I am glad to see you again, Dick," she said. "Do you work here?"

"Yes. I have been working here since Monday. When did you get back from Chicago?"

"Oh, we have been back several days. I have been hoping you would come and see us. You know promised you would."

"I will come," he said.

"Where in the world did you become so well acquainted with those people?" asked the Mr. Saunders, in surprise, when they had gone. "Why that is Mr. Overton, one of the wealthiest men in the city."

"Yes, I know it," said Dick, and then he explained how he came to know them.

CHAPTER XXIII.—Dick Calls on His Friends.

After supper that evening Dick put on his dress suit (he had one made by a Broadway tailor) and got ready to go and call on Mr. Overton and Ethel. After an half hour of general conversation, Mr. Overton turned it into personal channels.

"Let me see," he remarked reflectively. "I believe you told me you were an orphan, did you not, Dick?" he asked.

"I am an orphan," replied the boy, "although I do not remember whether I told you of the fact or not. I have not a relative in the world that I know of."

"Too bad," sympathetically. "We all like to have some one who is related to us by blood. You may have relatives somewhere, however. What was your mother's maiden name?"

"Densmore, sir—Mary Densmore."

Mr. Overton started.

"Do you know the Christian names of your mother's parents?" Mr. Overton queried.

"Yes, sir. Grandfather's name was William and grandmother's Harriet."

"Glory, hallelujah!" he cried. "Dick, my boy, you are not without relatives after all. You have them right here in Ethel and myself. Harriet Densmore was once Harriet Overton and my sister. She married Densmore, your grandfather, and they went West—to Michigan. I came to New York, and, becoming immersed in business, failed to keep track of them. I remember now that in a letter from Harriet, the last she wrote to me, she stated that they were the parents of a fine baby girl whom they had named Mary."

"My mother was born in Michigan," said Dick. "In Lansing."

"That is where they lived," assented Mr. Overton. "Dick, there is no doubt of it. You are my great-nephew."

One year has passed. Dick is living at the home of Mr. Overton, and is the handsome, manly youth of old, with the added polish given by constant intercourse with cultured people, with which class, as a relative of Mr. Overton, he is thrown in constant contact. Bob, Curtis, who, with his mother, lives with Mr. Romaine, has improved greatly, too, and is an agreeable visitor at Mr. Overton's. Ethel and he are great friends. Mr. Norwood's home is in the vicinity, too, and as Ethel and Agnes are great friends, Dick sees a great deal of that lovable girl. But his heart is up in the mountains of Montana, and they, having regularly written to each other, decided to become engaged. When Dick is twenty-one he and Lucy will be married, and he intends to go into business in partnership with Bob.

Next week's issue will contain "DICK DARE-ALL, THE YANKEE BOY SPY; or, YOUNG AMERICA IN THE PHILIPPINES."

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DEADSHOT DICK, THE BOY RIFLE KING

—OR—

A TENDERFOOT AMONG THE COWBOYS

By R. T. Bennett

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER II.

Making a Cowboy Dance.

"Come into the store and I will tell you," replied Bess, seizing his arm. "You can leave your mustang at the hitching bar at the door. I'm all alone in the place, for my father went to Santa Anna this afternoon to buy some stock, and he hasn't come back yet. If he had been here and saw what Cowboy Jack threatened to do to me he would have put a bullet in the big loafer. My goodness, what a lucky thing it was for you that none of that gang knew who you were! They are the very fellows who are laying for you."

"Indeed!" said the boy, as he led the mustang over to the store and tied him to the hitching rock. "I knew there was trouble of some kind going on at the ranch, and that's why I came out here. It's pretty evident then that those villains knew I was coming."

"Oh, yes, they've known it for a week, and have been looking for you to arrive ever since," replied Bess, as she led him into a little room.

"Perhaps they just recognized me, then?"

"I don't know. They might. How did you happen to come here, anyway?"

"Well," replied the boy, "I was at a military academy. That's where I learned to shoot so accurately with a rifle. My father was a business man in New York. Just before he died he failed in business and lost everything he had except the Big Horn ranch. It was in charge of Cowboy Jack, who acted as a sort of superintendent. As the returns from the ranch have for some time past been getting smaller and smaller, my father suspected that the man he implicitly trusted was cheating him. He asked me to come out here and investigate matters. As I am not of age, the property is being held in trust for me by my father's lawyer, a man named Peter Penny—"

"Ah! That accounts for why Cowboy Jack knew you were coming," cried Bess, excitedly. "Lawyer Penny was here a week ago, and he and the rascally superintendent of the Big Horn ranch were the ones heard plotting to rob you of your inheritance. But there! I am interrupting you. Go on with your story, Dick."

The boy glanced at her in a surprised way and said:

"There isn't much more to tell. When my father died I got legal papers from the lawyer to prove my claim on the ranch and started for this place. At Santa Anna I bought that broncho and came on overland. Now what in the world do you

mean by saying Penny was here cooking up a plot with Cowboy Jack to do me up?"

"I'll explain," replied the girl, quickly. "Everybody in Gold Nugget knows that Cowboy Jack is a drunken loafer who spends most of his time at this camp with a gang of his cronies from your ranch. In the meantime the cattle on the ranges are being neglected. It's common talk here that the beasts are being stolen and sold right and left—"

"Then, as I feared, the ranch is ruined?"

"Not yet. But it will soon be if a check isn't put on Cowboy Jack pretty suddenly," answered the girl. "About a week ago I was out in the bushes just beyond the camp, picking berries, when I heard voices and saw two men sitting in a glen talking. One was Cowboy Jack and the other one I learned was a lawyer named Peter Penny. It seemed from what they said that there was crooked work going on at the ranch. Your father was being robbed by Jack and his gang, and they were dividing the plunder with the lawyer."

"Great Scott!" gasped Dick in startled tones.

"Well, the girl went on, "the lawyer offered Jack a large sum to put you out of the way when you arrived to manage the ranch, and the superintendent accepted. The plan is to let you come to the ranch, and at the first favorable chance Cowboy Jack and his gang are to do you up."

"That's pleasant. Did they say why I am to be attacked?"

"Yes, if you are dead, the lawyer has so arranged matters that the ranch is to fall into his hands."

"I see," said the boy, nodding thoughtfully. "Go on."

"I haven't much more to tell," replied Bess. "They went away, and I hurried home and told father. But we could not warn you of your danger because we didn't know where to find you. That's why I said it was lucky you fell in with me as you did."

Dick gazed into the frank blue eyes of the pretty girl a moment and arose.

"I'm going," said he. "It's impossible for me to let you know how thankful I am to you for putting me on my guard against these villains. I thought I had a hard job ahead of me, but I've found it is much worse than I expected. But I ain't frightened a bit. I'm going out to the ranch to-morrow, and I'm going to fire out the whole crooked gang. They'll find out that they can't handle me as if I were a helpless infant."

"Look out for yourself, Dick," begged Bessie, earnestly. "Those men are bad all the way through and would not stop at murder if they found it to their interest to beat you."

"Oh, I understand the risk," he replied, quietly, "but I guess a boy of nerve is good for an army of such big bluffs as they are."

"Will you come and see me again?"

"Certainly I shall, for I've taken a great fancy to you, Bess."

"And I like you too," she admitted, with charming candor.

"I'm glad to hear that," he laughed. "Well, good-by."

And politely bowing to her, he went out, unhitched his pony and led the beast over to the Ranchers' Roost, and gave the animal to a stable boy

"Take good care of my nag," said he to the boy, as he gave him a dollar, "and have him ready for me at nine o'clock tomorrow morning."

The boy nodded, grinned and led the animal away. Dick then strolled into the bar-room and glanced carelessly around.

The place was filled with miners and cowboys, the air was laden with smoke and a fat man, with a good-natured face, was behind the bar, just in the act of serving Cowboy Jack with a drink.

But coming in he let go the bottle and recoiled from the bar, while his hand flew to the butt of a big pistol in the holster of his belt.

"Don't draw, you big bluff," laughed the boy. "I ain't going to hurt you."

"Yer won't hurt me, hey?"

"No," replied Dick in patronizing tones. "I won't hurt you."

"Why, yer measly little runt," he shouted in exasperated tones, "who sez yer could hurt me even if yer wanted ter? I've been a-tellin' my friends hyer as I was agoin' ter chaw yer up ther next time we met, an' now is ther time fer me ter start in."

He began to swear and jerked out his revolver. Bang!

The shot came from Dick's rifle.

He had not even taken the trouble to raise and aim it, but so marvelous was his skill with the weapon that the bullet hit Jack's pistol and sent it flying from his hand.

"I ain't got another shooter!" he bellowed. "I quit!"

"Oh, do you?" sneered Dick. "Well, I don't—see?"

"Don't kill a fellow" implored the rascal, a cold sweat bursting out on his forehead. "Yer wouldn't shoot an unarmed man, would yer?"

"I'm going to show all your friends what a big fool you are," answered the boy. "Had I come in here unarmed, you would have made me do the tenderfoot dance. Now the tenderfoot is going to reverse the tables and make you do the cowboy jig. Start up! Strike out with your feet, you mean-looking ruffian you, or I'll plug your feet with lead! Hey, there!" he added to a man who had been pounding a piano at the rear of the saloon. "Hammer out a reel on that old tin-pan, and I'll show you what a jackass Cowboy Jack looks like hopping up and down."

And bang! bang! bang! went Dick's rifle, every shot grazing the cowboy's big boots, and he flew up in the air, yelling:

"Yes, yes! I'll dance! Don't wing me!" For a few moments the barroom of the Ranchers' Roost was in a tremendous uproar, and the fun might have gone on for some time if the cowboy hadn't tumbled down exhausted.

Then Dick let up on him.

His friends rushed to his aid, picked him up and dragged him out.

The crowd surrounded Dick in the barroom, laughing heartily over the rough way he had handled the big ranchman, and every one patted him on the back and praised his courage.

"Waal, yer about ther slickest tenderfoot wot ever struck Gold Nugget," one of them declared. "Have a drink with me."

"No," replied the boy, shaking his head. "I never touch liquor. I came in to get my supper, and lodgings overnight? Can you accommodate

me, landlord? I ain't particular about the food or bed."

"Yer not?"

"No. Faith, I'd be afther takin' yer aven if I had ter shlake on ther flure meself," chuckled the owner of the place, who was quite a respectable man. "But I won't have ter do that, as it's wan good room I have empty. Sure, an' Gold Nugget would soon become a dacent place if ther loikes av you wuz ter be afther callin' down all ther tough Jimmies we hov floatin' around here, threadin' on the tail of ivery wan's coat. An' what is yer name agin, me lad?"

"I'm called Deadshot Dick," replied out hero, evasively, for he did not yet want it known who he was. "I'm from New York on business, and I expect my business will keep me here for some time."

"Bedad, I'm glad ter hear it, an' yer welcome ter shstay at ther Ranchers' Roost as long as yer in Gold Nugget."

The boy was anxious to get out of the noisy, enthusiastic crowd, and gladly passed into a cosy little rear room, where the proprietor's wife quickly served him with a good, substantial meal.

He then retired to a room to which he had been sent, and as he was tired out from his long a ride, he went to bed.

The boy slept soundly until midnight, when he was suddenly awakened by hearing his window being raised.

It was a clear night, and in the moonlight that streamed into the room through the window he saw the upper part of a man's figure.

"I'll give him a pleasant surprise," he muttered, and reaching over to a corner of the room near his bed, he seized his rifle and aimed it toward the fellow who was now climbing in the window.

After a moment the man got into the room.

It was so dark, however, that he lit a match to see where he was going.

By the flame he saw Dick sitting up in bed, aiming the rifle at him, and a yell of alarm burst from his lips, and he suddenly dropped the match and made a frantic rush for the window to escape.

But to Dick's surprise the match had shown him that the prowler was Ting Ling, the little Chinaman, and he shouted:

"Hey! Stop, Ting! I'm not going to fire!"

The frightened Mongolian paused suddenly and faced about.

"You knowee me?" he asked in trembling tones.

"Just recognized you in time to stop a shot I was going to give you. Come over here, you rascal, and explain why you are sneaking into my room in this fashion, or I'll shoot the pigtail off your yellow head!"

"Me come to helpee you!" declared the Chinaman, eagerly. "You helpee me, so be, I helpee you, Dickey," and he came over to the bedside.

Dick's interest was aroused, and he asked abruptly:

"How did you know I was in this here room?" "Mistler Barney O'Brien, de boss of hotel, he tellee."

"And what is your mysterious errand here?"

"Yo' knowee Cowboy Jack?"

"I ought to."

(To be continued)

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one's work in a kitchen that is lifeless, colorless, or all one color—all white, for example.

More time is spent in the kitchen than in any other room—and the happiness of the whole family is made or marred by the mood of the home-maker. It is a simple matter these days for any woman, no matter how limited her means, to have the satisfaction of working in a clean and sanitary, bright and cheerful kitchen. It calls only for choosing and blending colors. The expense is negligible.

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

ROOF BEAUTY IMPORTANT

Whether you plan to build a new home or re-roof your present one, remember the individuality of the roof determines attractiveness of your house!

WHAT! NO DINOSAUR EGGS!

We will have to worry along without dinosaur eggs this winter. War in China has prevented Roy Andrews Chapman and his expedition from moving in on the wastes of the Gobi desert in search of fossil eggs and the beginnings of man, according to H. R. Beckwith, one of the party which reached here this week via the Arizona Maru. The supplies and egg gathering apparatus have been locked up in Peking under the guns of the American fleet.

HUNT FOR MORE WINE FATAL

During the course of a dinner to several friends recently Mr. Cledat, a printer at Nantes, France, in a jovial mood, decided that a couple of bottles more of an ancient vintage were necessary for the party. Some guests with difficulty made their way to the cellar, but on reaching the bottles knocked over a lamp. The flames struck some gasoline spread on the floor and quickly spread to tanks adjoining the garage. An explosion wrecked the house to the second story.

Two women were killed and two others injured. M. Cledat has not yet been found and he is believed to be dead beneath the debris.

CHEERFUL KITCHEN IS ESSENTIAL TO MODERN HOUSEWIFE

Any woman who does her own work is entitled to an attractive kitchen.

It is not easy to keep up such an interest day in and day out when the kitchen floor is so hard and unyielding that to stand or walk on it quickly tires one out; or when the floor is a drab and shabby affair that is an eyesore because it always looks dirty no matter how often it is cleaned. Nor is it easy to be cheerful and lighthearted doing

LAUGHS

"Warmer, with greater humidity," said the weather clerk. "You're giving us hot air," grumbled the people, viewing him with distinct disfavor.

Mrs. Avenue—My good woman, it would give us great pleasure to help to broaden your life. Do you believe in the club for women? Mrs. Tenement—Sure, mum, the old rolling-pin is easier to handle and yet as good.

"No, sir," said Peckham, "I won't accept that picture. It doesn't look like my wife at all." "Well, you ought to be thankful for that," replied the artist, "but some men are so easily pleased that it's difficult to please them."

"That young man stays until an unearthly hour every night, Doris," said an irate father to his youngest daughter. "What does your mother say about it?" "Well, dad," replied Doris, as she turned to go upstairs, "she says men haven't altered a bit."

"When I landed in Chicago," said the self-made man, "I didn't have a cent in my pocket." "Huh," rejoined the ordinary person, "when I landed in Chicago I didn't have even a pocket." "Why, how's that?" queried the party of the prelude. "I was born here," explained the O. P.

Young Wife—I want you to promise me one thing. If we would avoid trouble, we must live within our means, and, to help me in doing this I want your promise that you will never run in debt. Young Husband—I will promise, my love; if I ever get in debt I'll let the other fellows do the running.

Mr. Snapp—Well, what are you going to do about it? Mrs. Snapp—Oh, don't be in such a hurry. It takes me some time to make up my mind. Mr. Snapp—that's strange. You haven't much material to work with.

The Fragments of a Bond

Well, you see, I was coming down Main street early that morning. Indeed, it was not eight o'clock when I left my rooms.

I had no idea it was so early, and had hurried forth, supposing it to be quite late.

Being set right by the clock in the tower of Trinity Church, as I passed that ancient edifice, I began to take it a little more leisurely, well knowing that Mr. Markham, our superintendent, wouldn't be in his office before nine, and that there was little I could do that day until after I had seen him.

I was just thinking what a strange lull there was in our business, when I saw a man hurrying along the street toward me.

He was about five feet six or seven high, well proportioned, clean shaven, hair thin on the top of his head—this last I noticed as he took his hat to wipe his forehead with a large silk handkerchief which he carried in his hand.

I had seen the man often before, but couldn't call him by name.

"Oh! Mr. Fox," said he, grabbing me by the arm, "have you heard the horrible news? I was just on my way to your lodgings. I want to retain you in this matter, and I want the whole thing thoroughly sifted to the very bottom, yes, even if I have to pay every cent of the expenses myself."

"But you've forgot, sir," said I, "that you haven't yet told me what this horrible news is—I don't even know your name."

"Of course—of course," said he, "that's very true; my name is Creigg—John Creigg. I'm a broker and house agent on State street. And you've no doubt also heard of Mr. Whitelock of Grand avenue? Well, last night he was foully, in fact, most brutally murdered. It was only discovered about half an hour ago by his valet, who came direct to me."

At that moment a policeman came running up.

"Mr. Fox," said he in an agitated tone, "you're wanted at the office immediately. There's been a most horrible murder—Oh!" as he noticed who my companion was. "You know all about it, I see."

"Yes," said I.

The policeman turned away, and we hurried to the station. Leaving Creigg seated in the outer room, I entered the superintendent's private office. Within ten minutes I had all the facts known at the office at that time in my possession.

Mr. Whitelock was an old man—say sixty-eight or seventy. He had survived his wife and children by some years, and the only heir to his vast possession was a little grandson, a sickly child who was now at a private boarding-house in the country.

Mr. Whitelock had been to pay a visit to his little grandson, and the day before this upon which his body was discovered he had sent his servant back to town with an important message for Mr. Creigg, at the same time telling his valet

that he need not return to the country, as he would come home by himself during the next day.

This man, whose name, by the way, was Augustus Walker, had faithfully delivered the message to Creigg and then returned home to the house on Grand Avenue.

Creigg had said that he should be obliged to call there in order to carry out his employer's instructions, and about an hour later did so. He remained in Mr. Whitelock's private room for two hours, and then left.

After locking the door, Walker, retired. The two female servants had already done so. None of the three were in any way disturbed until morning.

A little before half-past seven Walker started to put his master's private room in order. There, upon the floor, lay his master, whom he had supposed to be fully forty miles away.

His clothing was terrible disordered, and there was a wound, extending from the front part of the head down the forehead to near the bridge of the nose.

In consternation he called up the women servants, and, after consulting them, hurried off to Mr. Creigg's.

Creigg, after paying a hurried visit to the place, went to the police station.

Officers at once took possession of the house.

In one of the hands of the dead man there was found the merest fragment of paper, that appeared to have been torn from a greenback or a United States Government bond.

I asked for that fragment. It was at once delivered to my keeping. Then, turning to the superintendent, I asked:

"Who found this little piece of paper?"

"'Twas Butler that found it."

"Please do not mention this to any one. I would like, if possible, to keep this clue all to myself."

"Very proper," said the superintendent.

I went to work on the case, but for a good while with poor results.

Months passed. I had had a close watch kept on Walker; but we never caught him tripping, although Creigg had seemed to lean to the opinion that he knew more of the matter than we appeared to see.

The case was at this stand, when suddenly one morning Creigg burst into my room before I was dressed, and in eager haste cried:

"Walker's gone! He's off!"

"Gone where? Where's he off to?" I asked.

"To Europe—I'm sure of it," said my visitor.

"All right; and if there's any occasion for it, I'll go there too," I answered.

"And if you go, I shall go with you," said Creigg; "for, as I've always said, I'll see the bottom of this thing."

As I entered the superintendent's office that day he looked up, and, with more interest than he generally manifested, said:

"Oh, Fox! I suppose you've heard that Walker's off?"

"Yes, heard it this morning," I replied, and then I asked:

"Where has he gone to?"

"Took a steamer from New York to Liverpool. What do you think of it?"

"I don't like to say just yet. Mr. Markham, if

"you'll be so kind as not to press me," and then looking at him earnestly, I asked: "But what do you think of doing?"

"I want you to follow him by the next steamer and so bring this matter to a focus," said he, "for to tell the truth, it's a disgrace to this office."

"It shall be brought to a focus, sir, and this I promise you."

That night I started for New York; Creigg went with me.

The next steamer that sailed for Europe took us as passengers.

We reached London in ten days after we had started from home.

I soon paid a visit to Scotland Yard, and arranged everything with the authorities there. I was alone on that occasion.

We had put up at a third-rate hotel, not far from Scotland Yard, to have things handy, you know.

A night or two after my visit to Scotland Yard I heard mysterious sounds that seemed to come from Creigg's room.

It set me to thinking.

The next night, while we were seated together in the barroom, I said:

"Creigg, this is a little dull, ain't it? Suppose we have something warming?"

"I've no objections," said he.

And so I asked the bar-maid to let us have a private room.

We were soon accommodated, and the materials for mixing a punch were placed before us.

I took it upon myself to do the mixing.

I said nothing; but in less than two hours I helped Creigg to bed.

At the first opportunity I made a systematic examination of that man's room and property.

"What did I find?"

Wait and you'll soon hear now.

Luckily, the next day he was too sick to leave the hotel.

I received a message from Scotland Yard and went there immediately.

Walker was soon in the hands of the police, and I soon got to the bottom of all he knew; but I requested that for the present he might be detained at the office. I also requested that one or two more good men should be sent to the hotel.

I then paid a visit to the United States ministry.

After that I went back to the hotel and sought Creigg.

"Hello, old boy, where have you been all day?" was his greeting.

"Oh, just looking 'round a bit," said I.

SKILLED TOUCH NEEDED TO GIVE DISTINCTION TO THE DINING ROOM

The function of the dining-room is so clearly defined, the items of furniture so decisively indicated, that it requires a skilled touch to secure any real individuality in the decorations. But, nevertheless, a distinct individuality and a wide choice of styles, far from the old-time prosaic pieces, is now possible in the development of the modern dining-room.

Starting with the simple but really beautiful

little painted breakfast sets, we can work out a charming scheme according to the feeling and influence of many lands. We may choose French provincial furniture, with quaint peasant cupboards and tables, or warm, colorful Spanish decorations; Italian carved walnut pieces, massive Dutch Colonial, with its air of aristocratic solidity, or all types of the American Colonial.

One new tendency in the dining-room is exemplified in the Modern Home of the James McCreery & Co. A new and distinctive style in home arrangement, it combines a Heppelwhite buffet, a Sheraton serving table and ladder backed Chipendale chairs to make an interior uniquely effective. The Duncan Phyfe Colonial corner cabinet is particularly to be commended for giving the room a flavor of oldtime stateliness as well as creating a corner of real significance.

The deep old taupe ground of the Chinese rug, the printed linen draperies, the sparkle and glow of rosy glass on the table and of green glass decanters on the server, the pleasant glint of silver candelabra and coffee service on the buffet provide color accents that contrast vividly with the dark, gleaming surfaces of the furniture, and the soft neutral background of the walls. The prosaic entrance to the pantry or kitchen is concealed behind a handsome screen, its colors repeating many of the tones found elsewhere in the room, rich, subdued, mellow.

Here the family may gather for a cheery informal meal, or may hold a social gathering of dignity and importance. It is a room which has the air of having grown naturally, not of having been transplanted bodily from a furniture maker's catalogue. To an unusual degree it is successful in suggesting definite personality and seems to be an integral part of some happy circle's daily life.

As a background for the American Colonial furniture, which is daily growing in popularity, the quaint scenic wallpapers are especially appropriate, having been extensively used in Colonial times.

Such a paper was used in the dining-room of the early American home recently furnished by James McCreery & Co. at Hartsdale Fells. The furniture used is sturdy pine and maple, whose warm golden tints make a room sunny, a pleasant relief to eyes which are weary of dark colors. This room was more adapted to the genial group of intimate friends than to formal dinners and ceremonious entertaining.

LONDON COMMUTERS TO EAT IN EASE IN MOTORING CAFE

A restaurant-motorbus to accommodate thirty people, each provided with a separate seat and table, is nearing completion. It is designed for service between London and Folkestone. A feature of the bus is that almost any form of refreshment can be provided from rump steak or mutton chop with vegetables to a cup of tea. Under the car is a large tank to carry forty gallons of water for kitchen and toilet purposes.

The steadiness of the bus is revealed by the fact that a glass of water filled within an inch of the top stood unspilled on the table after a long test journey. The owner plans to place the bus at the disposal of the Folkestone authorities for the coming visit of Prince Henry to open Cliff Concert Hall.

TIMELY TOPICS

FAILURES UP 3 PER CENT IN FIRST HALF OF YEAR

Failures in the United States during the first six months of 1927 increased 3 percent in number over the same period last year, a tabulation released lately by Bradstreet's shows. The number of failures was 1,929, involving total liabilities of \$382,926,738. The liabilities involved showed an increase of 27.5 percent over last year.

The failure record shows a decrease of 12.4 percent in the number of bankruptcies, and of 3 percent in liabilities from 1922, the peak year in failures. The peak year in liabilities was 1924, and from that year liabilities this year show a decrease of 13.5 percent. The feature of recent years' failure returns has been the relatively heavy number of large failures, whether of banks or of other important enterprises which have suspended, the agency finds.

BRITISH DOCTORS TO PASS ON IMMIGRANTS TO CANADA

A more artful medical examination is to be made in the British Isles and Continental Europe of intending emigrants to Canada, and a staff of twenty-five qualified doctors, with different grades of salaries, are being detailed for this duty overseas.

Heretofore immigration inspectors abroad have given the emigrants "the once over" and generally have accepted local physicians certificates of physical fitness. The medical examinations have taken place at Quebec, St. John and Halifax. This has not worked with entire satisfaction.

It has been found necessary to turn back considerable numbers, and, in consequence, officers of the health department will now make the examinations before the parties leave. Any rejections will be made in Europe and the inspection at ports on this side will thus be modified.

LONDON'S SMALLEST HUMAN BEING TAKES HEARTY MEALS FROM SPOON

After being fed the first five days of her life with milk from a fountain pen filler, Alice Seabrook, London's smallest human being, is now taking hearty meals from a spoon. When she was born, three weeks ago, Alice weighed only one pound ten ounces, she is perfectly formed in body and has a particularly merry smile.

The tenth in her family, Alice does not hold the record for diminutiveness. A baby boy was born in London this year, who, it is stated, weighed only one pound, and candidates from Wembley, London, and Auckland, New Zealand, weighed in at one pound eight ounces, and one pound two and one-half ounces, respectively. The average weight of a new-born baby is about seven pounds, but size evidently isn't everything, as Sir Isaac Newton weighed less than two pounds at birth.

GIRL HOLDS UP BANK

Blonde, bobbed haired and defiant, a nineteen-year-old girl is being held at Saginaw, Mich., following her unsuccessful attempt to get \$5,000

from the paying teller at the People's Savings Bank.

Coolly pointing an old revolver into the face of E. E. Speckhardt, teller at the bank, the girl shoved a \$5,000 check signed "make it snappy" through the window and airily commanded the teller to "give me \$5,000, and make it snappy."

Speckhardt dropped to his knees behind the counter and set off a complicated burglar alarm system. Within a few seconds a policeman, several hundred pedestrians flocking at his heels, rushed into the bank and disarmed the girl. She fell into the patrolman's arms and broke into tears. The young woman gave her name as Viola Harris, of Flint. She is unknown in that city.

"I needed the money to pay off a mortgage," she told police, "and I thought that would be an easy way to get it."

OLDTIME RADIATORS WERE EYESORES IN HOUSEHOLD

The ceiling, walls and floor should be painted the same hue, as far as possible, the difference being only that of brightness. Even the radiators and exposed pipes should be painted the color of the immediate background. That is, if the wall back of the radiator is painted Alice blue the radiator should be painted likewise.

Painting them a fraudulent gold, bronze or silver makes them inharmonious with the general color scheme; and furthermore, thus painted, they fail to perform their function properly because they radiate less heat. The engineering department of the University of Michigan and the Institute of Industrial Research at Washington have proved this to be a fact. In general, we are told by them that this metallic pigment, which is used in bronze, reduces heat transmission as much as 2 per cent.

PNEUMONIA LEADS DEATH RATE ON EAST SIDE

Pneumonia and pulmonary tuberculosis, attributed largely to bad housing conditions, are the diseases causing the first and third highest mortality rates in the Mulberry district on the lower East Side. This is one of the most congested sections of the city, in which a study covering ten years of population changes and vital statistics has just been completed by the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor.

Organic heart disease is productive of the second highest death rate in the district, says a report issued recently by the society. Deaths in the district from accidents have increased steadily since 1920, but the death rate from cancer is low.

The Mulberry district, bounded by Houston and Canal Streets and the Bowery and Broadway, contains one of the largest Italian populations in the city. The study was instigated in connection with a maternal and child health program undertaken by the society in May, 1918. It reveals that the Italian population is steadily decreasing, due to the invasion of tenement areas by business and industry and the effects of the immigration act of 1924.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

USE FIRST GRADE LUMBER

Lumber is one of the most important materials that goes into a home. On it depends long life and staunchness—beauty of trim and finish—the lasting trueness of doors and windows—the results of paint and varnish—things that make for pride and satisfaction.

FISH FLOOD VICTIMS TO GET U. S. HELP

The Bureau of Fisheries is planning to rescue many millions of fish trapped in shallow pools as the flood waters of the Mississippi River recedes. Normally, there is sufficient rain in the southern part of the Mississippi Valley to keep ponds filled with water and prevent stranding of fish, but this year it is believed much rescue work will be necessary.

Every year, following the high water, rescue squads catch enormous numbers of young fish in nets as overflow pools in the upper stretches of the Mississippi begin to dry up. The adult fish leave the main channels and spawn in backwaters. As the high water recedes millions of young are left in pools.

UNUSUALLY ROOMY INTERIORS ARE LAUDED IN WHIPPET CARS

The unusual roomy interior provided in the Whippet is one of the features in the design of this car that has won for it a distinctive place in the light four field, according to Willys-Overland officials. It is claimed that the Whippet, with a type of design that has been followed this year by many automobile manufacturers, not only has generous leg room, but that the space in the compartments is greater than will be found in other cars of its price class and equal to the roominess found in most light six cars.

To provide plenty of room for driver and occupants was one of the most artfully studied problems of the engineers for Willys-Overland when it was decided to produce an automobile of this type.

GRAND TURK TO WED POOR GIRL, SO HE GIVES HER FATHER A JOB

The Grand Turk is to take unto himself a wife. Not a surprising thing, one would say, for a follower of the polygamous Prophet to do. Yet it is causing a lot of comment, particularly in view of the personality of the bride-apparent. Mustafa Kemal, the President of the Ottoman Republic, recently met by chance at Broussa a Montenegrin who was in search of work and who was accompanied by his daughter, a girl of seventeen.

Struck by the extraordinary beauty and grace of this child of the Black Mountain, Kemal sought her acquaintance, fell in love with her and asked for her hand and heart in marriage, offering to defray meanwhile the costs of providing her with an education befitting the exalted place which she will occupy as his wife. His proposal was accepted, and Angora is now anticipating the nuptials. Incidentally, the girl's father has been provided with a well-paying employment

PROTECT YOUR HOME AGAINST POISONOUS INSECTS

The air that brings the radio entertainment to your home can also transmit messengers of ill ome

Science has traced much of the spread of disease to germ-laden insects. The fly and mosquito are among the worst of the disease germ-carrying pests. And, like the radio waves, they are in the air—always about us.

A single fly may carry on its hairy body and legs as many as 6,000,000 tiny, but deadly, germs. Typhoid, tuberculosis, dysentery are among the diseases which may be stalking through your home—may be racked across your food—in the footsteps of the promenading fly. His path may be a veritable trail of death.

Malarial and other fevers are known to be conveyed by the mosquito. Rust-proof copper and bronze screen everlastingly keep the bars up against the winged carriers of disease, and they can always be relied upon for constant lasting service. Other materials may rust and tear, but the home equipped with bronze screens is a home protected against insects.

ATTRACTIVE GARDEN FURNITURE ADDS BEAUTY AND VALUE TO HOME

Twenty-five years ago a widow found herself with the responsibility of raising and educating a young daughter with a small residence as her only capital.

She decided to sell her little home, to which she had so artistically added effective touches of beauty, both inside and out of doors. The suddenness with which her home was sold gave her an idea, and since then she has been building one home after another. She calls them homes, not houses, because, she says, she puts into them the touches of beauty that make the home and attract the buyer.

This clever woman cannot speak too appreciatively on the subject of garden furniture, garden fences, attractive trellises, garden seats, sandboxes, bird houses and the many pieces that lend inviting notes to spots in her landscaping.

Much of the beauty and charm of a home lies in these inexpensive "fixings," and today they are made up in such large quantities and can be sold reasonably because the small home owner is realizing the importance of beautifying his grounds as much as does the owner of large estates.

The furniture, made of wood, always can be kept bright and new with a fresh coat of paint each season, and for that reason is most popular. Bird houses invite beautiful, musical guests to your yard. Trellises are effective as adornment and encouragement the growth of flowers or vines. The garden seat is a continual comfort from the time the flowers begin to bloom until the frost turns them brown. A sandbox with a canvas canopy makes a home of the yard for your child, and of course the prettily designed garden fences are both useful and ornamental.

PLUCK AND LUCK

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